

The Place of the Future

My new painting does not belong to the Earth exclusively. The Earth has been abandoned like a house infested with termites. And in fact, in man, his consciousness, there is a striving toward space. An urge to take off from the Earth ¹.

Kazimir Malevich

The Missing Chamber of the New Tumulus in Montecalvario

The recent works of the artists and theoreticians participating to this project take their roots in two exhibitions collectively planned and realised, one presented in April 2016 at *Palais de Tokyo*, in Paris in the exhibition *Vision*, the second at the *Réfectoire des Nonnes* in Lyon in December of the same year. A just released book *Cutting out Time in its Place. Experimental Journey* ² retraces the most essential moments of this work, underlining two aspects: the verbal form of the research, or to be more precise, the practice of the interlocution ³ and the study of some contemporary artworks and their relationship with a given place. This research is based on models similar to the ones of architecture, elaborated by some members of the group during the discussions in order to make visible through gestures the complexity of the site invested by the artwork. The most important result was the reinvention of the concept of place. A place that may not be reduced to its geographic or topographic definition but that opens up space to the time and activates its memory. In other words, the place appears when the artist intervenes in it as an archaeologist would do; the artwork in order to find the right

¹ Letter to Mikhail Matiushin, June 1916, Manuscript Department, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. Quoted in C. Douglas, *Kazimir Malevich*, H.N. Abrams, New York 1994, p. 26.

² *Découper le temps en son lieu. Parcours expérimental / Cutting out Time in its Place. Experimental Journey*, B. Rüdiger (dir.), with the contribution of Y. Annicchiarico, S. Bergala, A. Bonnard, G. Careri, V. Ceraudo, R. Joly, J. Lauro-Mariani, Th. Léon, Ph. Rousseau, L. Sahakyan, ed. Ensba Lyon, 2019.

³ The philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer to define that particular exercise of collective speech from which dialectical confrontation raises a certain form of truth studied this term. In his book *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960) Hans-Georg Gadamer gave a systematic reading of hermeneutics by contrasting ^[1] a scientific and epistemological attitude with a claim of truth in other key experiences of existence, like that of aesthetics, of historiography, of interpersonal dialogue. See *Truth and Method*, Continuum Publishing, U.K., 2011.

position in space and time has to invent the site. The artwork belongs to a place when it reveals the stratification of the gestures and narrations.

The concept of stratification has been defined in the 80's, by the American theorist of conceptual art, Lucy Lippard, as *Overlay*⁴. More precise than stratification, the concept of *overlaying* underlines the action of covering something existing with something new, like a piece of tracing paper covers an already existing drawing to thus create a new one, taking into account what can be seen in transparency from the layers underneath.

The idea of *Overlay* is one of the essential aspects of this exhibition. The artists have indeed exhibited artworks inside the *Archaeological Museum of the Sienese Chianti*, like tracing papers covering already existing layers of the place. Unlike other projects of the group, this intervention in the museum of Castellina in Chianti is not the result of a work in studio nor of a collective project. Each artist has been working alone, developing and offering a single work. The unity and the coherence of the final project lies in the long process of interlocution that had preceded the exhibition. A long series of discussions and confrontations about problematics of contemporary art from artists of various generations, working in different places and countries all over the continent. Each artist confronted this place and its history, highlighting one of its particular aspects. The starting point has been the Tumulus of Montecalvario. The site and the elements found, the ones that have escaped the grave robbers throughout the centuries, are one of the essential elements exhibited in the museum. The excavation of the site had revealed that the four funerary structures of the tumulus, following the four cardinal directions, had never been completed. The entrance hall of the south one does not lead to any funeral chamber.

The starting point of the exhibition project has thus been this one: to complete the funeral chamber that is waiting since 27 centuries, the will of a prince from the Etruscan antiquity to build it. Maybe precisely because the Etruscan culture is no more existing, or surviving unconsciously inside us, not only in the genes of the inhabitants of the place, but also in some ways and in some hidden thoughts, completing the funeral chamber seems to be a necessary metaphorical gesture. To reoffer the

⁴ Lucy Lippard, *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*, Pantheons Books, New York, 1983.

possibility of this passage from a dimension of time to another, that has been for all cultures and especially the Etruscan, essential. In the Etruscan culture, maybe even more radically than in any other important ancient culture, the path toward the death gave birth to several forms of rites and beliefs. The most striking thing is certainly the relation to objects and representations that were intended to reproduce a place for the future life based on the one that was the present of the deceased. The funeral chambers of the Etruscan culture were not only depositories for the bodies of the deceased with their objects and images, but real vectors of time. A time opened and complex that holds the past of the deceased in a vivid present. A lengthy wait to pass this threshold, that, opening to the future accomplishes it, making thus potential and fecund everything that has been existing. This future, seen from the present of an ancient prince is particularly interesting, because it does not correspond at all with anything of our time. In this ancient way of thinking, that used to consider the foresight as a key to understand the present, the time was not linear. To see the future did not mean to see everything that would happen, as we would like to do nowadays when we imagine futuristic worlds and technological fantasies, on the contrary, it was about seeing only what could be significant in the present. The future was, for the ancients, a present time read from a postponed place. Thus, also the future of the death, or of the resurrection, to use a word closer to our culture, was not a linear time but a singular time, unique and linked to the reality of one single life. Those relationships to the time and to what was called fortune in the roman culture, that took from the Etruscan their essential cults and uses, were the starting point of the contemporary artworks exhibited in the museum. The artworks can be seen as objects that an ancient prince would have put today inside the finally completed funeral chamber. Forms that are opening a crack in the space-time dimension of our reality. An ultimate layer, an *Overlay* that covers, reconnecting disconnected times and spaces, a piece of tracing paper that finally reveals that the time went out of joint.

The art of foresight has clearly inspired all the artists whose artworks are reproduced in the next pages. This particular art of divination, the art of haruspicy, able to read the signs of the time, and that Cicero in his book *De Divinatione* divides in three categories: the art of the observation of lightning, the interpretation of omens

contained in the entrails of sacrificial animals, and finally the evaluation of the miracles. Obviously no one of the artists would pretend to practise any of these arts, but they all let themselves free to imagine the time of our future confronting with this ancient art. Whether they are a hazard game, like the sticks of the Mikado, the today's reality of the mountain paths of the illegal immigrants in search of a better future, the fantasy of feathers, wings and flight of birds or the future of embedded, cybernetics bodies; the complex relationship to the time of foresight has been the main inspiration for the artworks here reproduced. The spectator, can put himself, just as the artists did with the art of haruspicy, in a position of ignorance and look at the artwork as an enigma, that is not to be understood or known but experienced. If he wants to, he can open up time to the experience of the present.

Translated by Marion Roche