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Angela Barbanente

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edited by Elio Trusiani

Elio Trusiani

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Gislene Pereira

Maria do Rocio Morais do Rosario

Elio Trusiani

Cristina de Araujo Lima

Yara Vicentini

José Pessôa

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Festen. A memorandum for the workshop Architecture of festivity
Maurizio Vogliazzo, Decio Guardigli

We are a saturated society, melancholy, tormented by the future. Now that extreme poverty in the real sense of the term has disappeared, it is imported as a phantom, in an identification with the victims of our doubly guilty culture, to confirm how much the economy that we have invented rests on poverty, real or imaginary, rather than on a symbolic prodigality in a condition which is the exact opposite of what would be needed to celebrate.

We are not poor but impoverished, like the uranium which we let loose in the world.

Celebration: hunger, satiety

In which we get to the heart of things and make a basic comparison. Brazil with its fabulous carnival is also the country of the programme *fome zero* ('zero hunger' in Portuguese). The carnival is carnivorous, it sublimates the preferred diet. At Bahia very little is required to notice and to realise that this is a culture which believes in celebrating and which seems to gain access to something profound, very profound, innate, through celebration, music and the extraordinary rhythm with the pouring of hundreds of thousands or millions of people onto the street. We are barred from it perhaps by the satiety we have acquired, however understandable that might be. It is as if we, thanks to detergents which wash whiter, were only allowed the surface of this furious and necessary party making or as if despite the transport we were relegated to metaphorical, but not completely, skin diving

without scuba tanks, mirroring the tourism of similar occasions. To manage to account for such a carnival without even having to resort to culture, anthropology, or history, to be content with comparing the hunger down there with the stomach upsets that rage here, perhaps that is why in comparison our celebrations can only be recreational, unless a link with something equally archaic, has survived, driven wild, with barefoot runners and people whipping themselves, moving back into folklore, chronologically out of phase.

Finally the question must be asked how the carnival without *Sambodromo* of Bahia, already electrified in its days (1950), will survive economic progress? *A deduction.* The festival, rather than being another use of space is perhaps the effect of the absence of space which would otherwise exist.

Raves

In which one reflects on certain symmetries. As the most discomfiting psychoanalysis teaches us, enjoyment is outside the law. The ingredients of a rave: an abandoned terrain on the margins, an often assembled acoustic system and electronic, high volume self produced music; illegal substances sold in the shadows; young participants. A symmetry can be discerned in these ingredients. Everybody is located at the extremes, physically/mentally distant from the reputable centre. The legal and the illegal are reciprocally arranged and appear simultaneously: the centre is necessary and supports, as a planet supports its satellites, the transgressive extra-territoriality. The Bologna *Street Parade* is a large rave which takes place in the city. It attracts

tens of thousands of participants. It is an institution, but it generates phenomena of rejection in an urban environment. It is an extraneous body. The citizens rebel, they complain of damage, uneasiness, dirt, neglect, danger, confusion, noise, insecurity, drugs, death.

Another deduction. Spatially the festival is borderline. If a rudimentary diagram of it were drawn you would see a frontier line at the centre of a grey blurred area. In confirmation of the longsightedness of that same psychoanalysis, you really experience pleasure in this area: you may go into ecstasy.

A cold party

Where it is shown that even the heat of these times is used coldly. Décosterd and Rahm are Swiss (we will see that this is not without consequences) and are the creators of *Chaleur/Dépense* (1998), a minimal installation, but along the lines of the thought of Georges Bataille which the title itself alludes to.

This project involves the emission of heat without any gain for a "dispersion, continuous and without limits". A consumption of simple energy, dissipative and unproductive. Its primary sense cannot help but be physically noticed by visitors together with the heat.

The energy consumed serves no other purpose. It carries no other message. It is added to that of the sun. This 'unproductive', but not insignificant art arrives from Switzerland the bank of the planet, a sort of celibate celebration, cold, with no purpose.

Consideration. In *Chaleur/Dépense* we would find the warmth, if not the climate, of a celebration and also the reasons for it, but nothing to celebrate, in exchange for a slight sense

of aesthetic panic, corresponding to the period we live in.

Grape, doughnut, water melon, wine and Unità festivals: for tourist use

In which a very special spatial nature is recalled and pointed out and meanings placed in festivals are finally discovered. At Viserbella, a district of Rimini, there used to be an avenue of fields in the gridwork of the land between the railway line and the sea, which was later on cultivated with equally impressive hotels and condominiums. Before the use of the toponym employed in map making, it was called *Campo grande*. The local tourist committee used to periodically organise dance festivals in one of these field, not even 50 metres from the sea, but in a countryside already inevitably desolated. This field was saved by the Master Plan.

In the Summer a stage was constructed with scaffolding for ballroom dancing orchestras and theme festivals were organised periodically. They were a great success with the public, a little old perhaps, but cheerful, vivacious, sincerely enjoying themselves with a contagious enjoyment. Each locality along the kilometres of coastline had its guests and its festivals (but *never* on the same dates). At a certain point, but straight away I think, they found that the couples dancing waltzes, polkas and mazurkas were having trouble on the bare ground and they quickly acted to solve the problem: a slab of concrete. This square concrete construction stood out, grey, artificial and immediately cracked, the result of poor workmanship and materials, like a modest work of land art. A more familiar observer would have seen this as

confirmation of how much the people of Romagna with their poor and rustic past hate any manifestation of nature that is not controlled. Even in September 2000 I remember the same slab of concrete full of elderly and graceful dancers, which cynical moralising would define as terminal, propelled in pairs onto the dance floor as if they wanted to make their concrete base rise up and take them off to heaven like that, directly, not separately, but altogether, without passing through hospitals, disfigured by illnesses, at the rhythm of the umpteenth mazurka. If you looked carefully you could really grasp the meaning given to each festival, almost like in a Zen story.