

53rd Venice Biennale **MAKING WORLDS: Creating free worlds**

There are approximately six billion human beings on planet earth, six and a half billion different visions of the world and different truths. Artists, the ones whose art has become a profession, are much less, and they should be the ones to be more aware of the 'gift' of creativity. The world we live in has become flat, as Thomas Friedman says. Everything tends to bring us close to one another, from trade to the revolution of communication. Humanity will have to deal not only with borders and cultural identities, but above all with the power of creative thinking: before making worlds, we need to imagine different worlds. In spite of the global crisis, this 53rd Venice Biennale has opened more alive than ever, surrounded by inevitable controversy. 'Making worlds' is a nice title, it could work for future biennials, but also for philosophy conventions since it is all-embracing. The philosopher and 'conductor' Daniel Birnbaum has tried to start from a tabula rasa, questioning

**Matteo Basile,
Thisoriented # 1,
2009**
*courtesy Galleria
Pack, Milano,
Guidi&Schoen Arte
Contemporanea,
Genova*



himself on 'how could the research of a new principle be carried out today'. We shouldn't underestimate his awareness of dealing with a cultural and creative turning-point. The new visions of the world are yet to come, and there is no new action without a new thought to anticipate it. In Venice, I certainly saw good-level artworks. Some stars of art that shine of their own are next to others lacking of creative energy, in which communication is all mental to the detriment of the sense or it is played on the mere visual troubling that has nothing truly provocative in it, such as, for example, the inhospitable and ugly cafeteria located in the new Biennale building by Tobias Rehberge (winner of the Golden Lion for the Best Artist!). To build, then, a new world in which art, inspiration and imagination would open unwalked paths. It is beyond doubt that every visitor builds his own Biennale, each one following a different emotional path, attracting like a magnet

what is already in his experience and never losing connection with that great all-moving energy that is curiosity.

There was a strange smell of naphthalene in some exhibition spaces and I asked myself what it would be about: naphthalene preserves objects, keeps unwanted hosts away, but, if I am allowed to go beyond metaphor, this 53rd Biennale does not aim at all to be a stale place to think over the past. Or, at least, these were not the premises that Daniel Birnbaum wanted. A reputable Biennale projects itself into the future, has the courage to show disruptive, experimental new worlds. As usual, we find ourselves face to face with impressive artworks, with a visual excess of information where the mental prevails over the sense, even if big efforts have been made to hold this tendency down. Only a more thoughtful and sharp reading might allow us to find a train of thought, a sense, and help us discovering a grain of order in the chaos.

It has been quite a while since there is no order or direction. You find yourself immersed in the Big Bang garden, catapulted in this explosion of fragments, and if you move without an inner GPS, you might be lost forever. An 'emotional guidance system' can be an excellent guide. To try to stop and feel what the artwork communicates.

Being aware that all languages and movements have been digested and transformed, we are standing in front of a black hole with just a question in mind: and now, what will happen? The moments of crisis intensify this anxiety over the future, but they are also the best times to wish for changing.

To understand how far our disoriented and confused time gave up understanding, we just need to start the journey and dive into the many universes

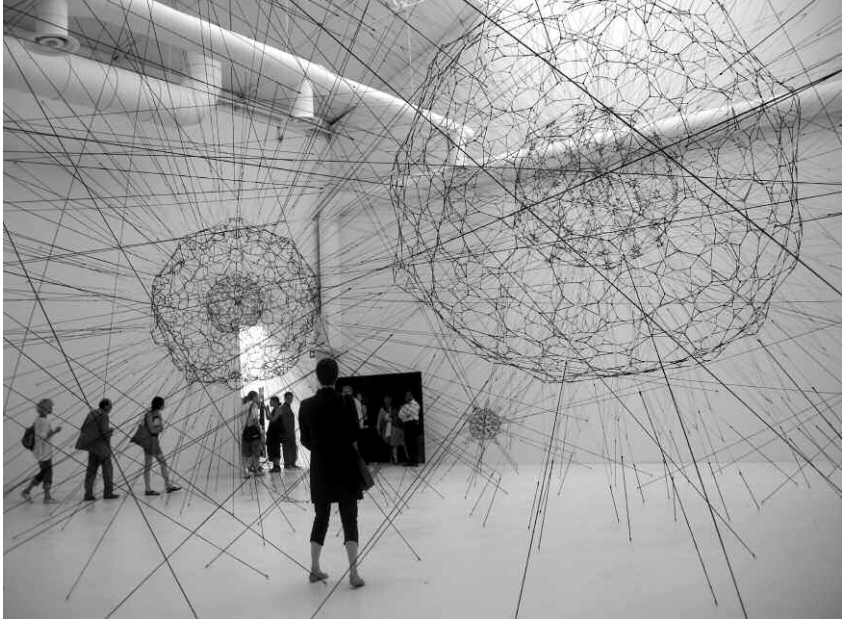


here in Venice, among the numerous artists chosen by the curator, who included very young artists and some others from the present perfect of all creative disciplines, from photography to installation, from painting to sculpture, highly reducing the presence of video art. There are also some debatable choices, but this is an obvious point.

Connected to my EGS (Emotional Guidance System) I tuned in to a certain kind of artworks that made me think to the complexity and, at the same time, to the simplicity of the universe, beginning with Argentinean artist Thomas Saraceno; born in Tucuman in 1973, with his installation in the Giardini he proposed an experimental reconstruction of the origin of the universe through a spider's

Lygia Pape,
Ttèia I, C. 2002,
Corderie
dell'arsenale

**Tomas Saraceno,
Giardini
Galaxy forming
along filaments,
like Droplets along
the Strands of
Spider's web, 2008**



web-like structure that guides the weaving of a professional weaver, a black widow. The invisible connections, also moving a world of Calvinian memory, are those created by Ligia Pape (1927-2004), the Brazilian artist that opens the Arsenale Corderie with her magical setting. In darkness, the steel wires create an immaterial space: the sculpture appears made of light.

Constellation by Chun Yun is composed of computers and several appliances that are outside of their ordinary context and installed in a dark space. The warning lights flash continuously, reproducing a small universe. Grazia Toderi employs video to observe reality from a far away perspective. The light trajectories and the distant constellations, between reality and imagination, are a source of inspiration for the artist, who presents at the Arsenale the double video projection *Orbite Rosse (Red Orbits)*: Toderi's pulsating maps cannot be found in any geographical atlas. Among the artists working with light, I would like to mention Korean Haegue Yang with his seven luminous and perfume-diffusing sculptures that attract and, at the same time, reject the viewer, since the artist expressly worked on the concept of tension caused by the provisionality of

the daily scenery.

This year's Biennale is full of allusions intertwining the earthly and the spiritual spheres, even if the emphasis is on the 'doing'. More than ever, this is evident in Chinese artist (born in Paris in 1974) Huang Yong Ping's work, showing enormous Buddha's hands made of cedar wood, already displayed at the UCCA Foundation in Beijing. Another artist following this vision is Paul Chan (Hong Kong) with his *Sade for Sade's Sake*. Inspired by De Sade's work, it is a projection constituted of human bodies' shadows in motion: on the wall, erotic and daily life scenes. Of carnality only the shadow remains, to testify the illusory and immaterial universe. Among the collateral events, I would like to point out two impressive exhibitions: *The Fear Society*, Pabellon de la Urgencia alle Gaggiandre and *Unconditional Love*, organized by the Moscow Museum of Modern Art. Fear and its opposite: love. The first one brings together thirteen artists of different generations that interpreted and showed what the Fear Society is, mirroring the terrible times we live in. It is part of this exhibition Alfredo Jaar's beautiful video on Pasolini. *Unconditional Love* presents the impressive high definition digital video *The Feast of Trimalchio* by AEF+S that

updates the story of Petronius' *Satyricon*, transposing it in a luxury hotel. Here, too, the passion, the carnality, the desire turn into the ephemerality of existence, defining love through its negation: it is the longing love, the love that is constantly dealing with emptiness and its absence.

To finish, some mentions of the Italian Pavilion that consecrated Luca Beatrice's artists, who protected himself under the umbrella of ideology, trotting out political speeches that have nothing to do with art: a show in poor taste. We might not like the artists of the Italian Pavilion presenting Collaudi: *Omaggio a F.T.*

Martinetti, but I am sure that the provincial, more than provocative, context is not useful to Italian art. The artists deserve more respect. The works by Matteo Basilè, Luca Pignatelli, Elisa Seghicelli, Silvio Wolf, Lodola and Nicola Bolla are remarkable, while some others look weaker, such as the ones by Valerio Berruti and Davide Nido. But this is just a point of view, and a point of view can be a partial vision, even if the world is such because it contains all the points of view, all the visions. The universal and the particular are inescapable – we hope more and more – in making *free* worlds...

Paul Chan,
Sade for Sade's
sake,
2009

