

'We loan so much to life, to what is so precarious in it - 'real life', of course - that our credit is soon used up". André Breton's opening words to the 1924 First Surrealist Manifesto theorised a strategy of art moving closer to life itself in order to resolve that "lack" of reality, the daily, chronological grind, through the affirmation of a sur-reality built of imagination, dream, "madness" even, that which the everyday can only have suspicions of (a internal window - one onto the unconscious). Everyday acts are carried out in the shadows of incompleteness and inadequacy, they are in no way that which Kris has defined as being at "the service of the ego". Through their stereotyping, they tend to carry people toward a movement that is only apparent, toward paralysis. Dada, already, and the Cabaret Voltaire especially, had placed the emphasis on the actively liberating power of the imagination as a practical deterrent for re-founding art on an anthropological level. This, however, happened with a notably cheery cynicism, in the understanding that leaving the tabula rasa also meant going back to it {in such a way so that everything and nothing signifies), without fetishizing the specificity of the creative moment, of the work created. Moreover, Dada was interested in dismissing the notion of the artistic work considered as a privileged production of the imagination through the affirmation of play and of the absurd. With Dada, then, art really is at the service of the ego and - with the exception of the Berlin group - it is never at our service, where "we" is understood as being a social body which works out its own liberation through artistic experience at a communal level. Here, the political level consists of the total affirmation of the ego, removed from that incomplete everyday and delivered to a globality which however continues to observe it individually. The rejects and the diversity of Surrealism instead consist of the affirmation of an art as a liberating practice for the individual "I" and the collective "we". This liberating practice is carried out through the recuperation and the privileging of the notion of the artistic work in the sense of a function of the ego over and above one's own egotistical circle and also through one's own egotistical circle, until it arrives at' sociality and into history. Artistic creation thus becomes the attempt to retrieve from the sub-normality of the real and to recreate, using Melanie Klein's concepts of the origin of creativity and the development of symbols and the sense of reality. "Every creation is actually a re-creation of an object which was once loved and whole, but which was then lost or ruined, of a whole world and a shattered self; if the work of art is for the artist the most complete and satisfying world with which to try and remedy regret and the desperation born from depression and the rebuilding of its broken objects, it is nothing more than one of the many human methods for reaching this goal". (H. Segal, Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein, 1968). Yet Surrealism does not tend to consider artistic work as being interchangeable with other human activities in that it privileges in a very specific way the techniques of artistic creativity. The work becomes a testimony, the lapsus of the desire to bring the ego back to the level of the visible sign, to its own unity. Unity is seen as being a transgression of the structural incompleteness into which the world has been thrown and where it now exists, a world which always tends to see this unity as an impossibility. In this way the eccentric and the exemplary are rebuilt, a unique experience that is not granted to all and one which the artist in some ways seeks to hide, making her own working space clandestine and restored to typical didactic techniques. But restoring the object also means giving functionality back to the social object, the community body, which instead lives separated in the stupefied distance of contemplation. Sociality thus becomes the opaque mirror in which the artist can measure her own difference, a difference that is a plus value for herself, but a paralysing limit with regard to society. The Living Theatre's strategy of moving art closer to life itself comes from a knowledge of all this, the unhappy awareness of a recognised separation. Over time, Julian Beck and Judith Malina built up a counter-community of actors and performing artists who found in the collective a farce to affirm a specific theatre vitally and contentedly contaminated by social themes such as freedom, violence, oppression, war and exploitation. Such themes require the group to have a different kind of creativity: one not based on the pride of individual creation but rather on the collective elaboration of a language which willingly loses its workshop style or committee character to take on the echo of an experimental experience based on the relationship between theatre and social communication. The Living Theatre use a system of destroying boundaries which links theatrical art to its double: life. Art and its double, the world. The world broken by a system of rules which determine the relations of production between people and props up social and cultural conscience. Art as production and market offer, works which are goods and yet at the same time, an offer of social contamination. The contamination is their ideological value, it is their poisonous presence, the impure vitality contained in the dead object, in the

restricted gesture of the work. The negative: an ineluctable limit where art's unhappy conscience is consumed and touched upon, a knowing detachment from and lucid impotence in the face of a world which is changed elsewhere. The negative then can be vital; a horizontal collapse of the value of art in terms of pure quantity and a tautological vertical movement of a superstructural gesture which affirms the presence of alternative models. Models which are cynically circumscribed in the splendour of the own exemplarity (the work of art), and stoically trying to face down the world. In a situation in which the imagination is made concrete by facts and then offers itself up as a consumer goods item even on a political level, the aesthetic action of the Living Theatre uses a procedure which is no longer metaphorical but metonymical. Imagination passes from a state of formal impalpability to a radical breaking of boundaries, so that it claims for itself the possibility of constructing a concrete space and a permanent image of its own production. Technological development has shifted primary needs from a world that was far the most part biological (hunger and other bodily necessities) to one which is more mental, in which ideology and the will to modify reality become the prime movers of any action. Formerly, aesthetic action only occupied the field of the figurative and the metaphorical, a field which metaphorically tried to make itself a total symptom of the world. Technology has largely freed people from the structural obsession of fulfilling their primary needs and has brought back so-called values from a state of moral precariousness to one of necessity. And necessity has taken on the urgency of biological and elementary needs. In this situation, the Living Theatre has tried to get rid of the metaphor and to take on a more direct, concrete way of behaving. For this reason it used the metonymic imagination as a means to realize a strategic objective: the occupation and re-animation of the world. Initially using the guerrilla techniques of sudden possession, the Living Theatre gave itself permission to use any kind of material and took charge of any external space or situation necessary to exercise or display its own imagination. In this way it set up camp in close contact with everyday space and built an aesthetic reality which was in concrete opposition to the context of the "real". This was a context motivated by the structural law of unity in which each and every action is teleological in that it is used for the ends of production. The actions made by the Living Theatre, however, put themselves forward as a tautology in that they used a direct transparency of the free will both of the imaginary and of the imagination. Thus, the Living Theatre's work does not remain frozen in an image but triggers a breaking down of the boundaries of external reality, trespassing on and transgressing its functional laws. Such a transgression, though, only allows the occupation of the space of disobedience and revolt. The behavior of the actor remains precarious because the social context, in the final analysis, is able to reabsorb such behavior. A behavior which is a mystified freedom in that the system permits the exercise of this freedom only because it does not directly affect its own (economic) structure. The optimism with which the (revolting) object puts herself forward with the clumsy qualities of material and form is destroyed by the law of objectivization, of turning into goods, which swallows up any evasive, ideological intentionality in favour of a formal use of the work. The incompleteness of the reading is due to the system's necessity to bear witness to an articulation of ideas and behaviors as symptom of its own (liberal) complexity. The Living Theatre founded an original form of a total theatre, a space where totality is not lost or Wagnerianly dropped into the abyss in the heights and depths of myth but accepts the insanity of a horizontal confrontation with the world. Thus develops the idea of an art which is producer of objective works or ephemeral events. In the course of the 20th century this unleashing, this crossing of the boundaries has permeated other arts and other languages. It has perforated the categorical rigidities of artistic production, restoring the double face of the specific and the general to the theatrical act. The breaking of the frames in the 60's was anticipated by the Living Theatre, in the involuntary but carefully- practiced situationism of a group which, with its approach at once Romantic, Puritan and American had the ability to take on experience of European art and affirm the cultural value of artistic co-existence and the moral value of social co-existence.