

Sandro Dernini

PLEXUS BLACK BOX



**A MULTICULTURAL AESTHETIC INQUIRY INTO
AN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY BASED ART PROJECT**

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To my mother Rosa Sanfilippo,
to George Chaikin,
Stelio Fiorenza, Paolo Maltese, Silvio Betti,
Ciro Ciriaco, Giovanna Ducrot,
Langouste MBow, Leonard Horowitz,
Sarah Farley, Bruce Richard Nugent,
and
to all other Plexus friends
who are not anymore with us
along this endless art journey.

PREFACE

In this book, I present a revised edition of my Ph.D. dissertation *A Multicultural Aesthetic Inquiry into "Plexus Black Box" an International Community-Based Art Project*, completed in 1997 at the School of Education of New York University.

In particular, in Chapter VI, with a deconstructionist approach, I revised my original "close reading" of *Plexus Black Box*, and, in Appendix C, there is updated chronology of Plexus activities and participants, from 1982 to December 2006.

Plexus Black Box is related to a series of art events made in the '80s and mid '90s by Plexus International, an ongoing group of artists, scientists and community activists in which I participated since its beginning in 1982, in New York City.

Plexus art co-operas, conceptualized as global community-based art events with no financial banking, have involved on some occasions hundreds of participants from different parts of the world, against the slavery of art and the disengagement of the artists from the community. From 1984 to the present, Plexus International has played a seminal role in the conception and realization of numerous experimental interdisciplinary, collaborative, cross cultural, and multi art & science events, which are still an unexamined part of the contemporary history of art.

Plexus International is still striving 25 years later in a contemporary art environment known for the brief duration of art groups and movements. Through its quarter of century documentation, it is providing a unique historical opportunity for artists to get *their own independent community-based artistic identification*.

This book has the overall aim to contribute to the claim of a legitimacy also for a *community-based artistic identification*, challenging in this way the hierarchical Western view that the artistic identification *is conferred to the artist only by the Artworld*.

The assumption of my inquiry in 1997 was that a more participatory understanding of community-based art experiences should be invaluable in developing local and global alternative strategies for the reinforcement of mutual respect necessary to cohabit with diversity. Now, in 2007, my assumption for

publishing this book is that a more participatory understanding of Plexus artistic and creative process, as a qualitative problem solving, should be invaluable in the acknowledgement of *art* as an underestimated individual and collective *well being* resource toward the sustainable development of alternative strategies. In this way, it will contribute to overcome the obsolete notion of *autonomous art* by means of a more complex interdependent vision of *art*.

I was part of the project under inquiry and I had to deal with the methodological problem how, as an “insider,” I could conduct an “objective” investigation. I resolved such methodological challenge by having “insider” accounts intersubjectively validated and supported by evidences publicly accessible as constituents of the community-based art project under inquiry. I concluded my inquiry with an open end, with an open “*multi-points perspective*” critical contribution, because I identified non feasible to terminate with “*one-point perspective*” understanding a multicultural study on an international community-based art project.

In this book, I present not a formal aesthetic analysis but contingent multicultural aesthetic characteristics of *Plexus Black Box*, from 1992 to 1993, with the wish to offer the possibility to grasp an “*insider*” understanding of it.

I am conscious of the limits of my critical contribution, as a context-bound to my own interpretation, therefore, I would like to invite all Plexus participants to implement collectively online this book, through the Plexus website www.plexusforum.net, with their “*insider*” interpretations for the publication of a new revised edition of *Plexus Black Box* book, as an effective collective participatory effort.

My aim is to achieve also for Plexus International a historic acknowledgement for its 25 years independent art journey, as well as, to establish a Plexus credit line to continue to run ahead toward its own future.

Sandro Dernini, Rome January 2007

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I wish to express my gratitude to the members of my Ph.D. Dissertation Committee of the School of Education of the New York University, Department of Art and Art Professions, Professors. David W. Ecker, Angiola Churchill, and John V. Gilbert, who were able to guide me in dealing with such a complexity of issues raised by the subject matter of the study. I wish also to thank Maria Pia Marsala for her critical editing of this revised edition and David Boyle and Lynne Kanter for the first editing in 1997.

I would like to thank all Plexus players with whom I shared the experience of Plexus. In particular I would like to acknowledge as coauthors all "insiders" who contributed to this book. They must be acknowledged for their indispensable and critical discussions on my Ph.D. inquiry, which shaped at the same time the dissertation and the history of Plexus. The survival artists' struggle in the community was our motivational force.

There are so many people who did and do so much that are not properly mentioned in these pages. For this, I apologize and give them my commitment for a further implementation of this book, through a new revised edition reporting all their inputs, corrections and missed credits.

CHAPTER I

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE INQUIRY

Introduction

Plexus started its activities in 1982, in the Chelsea neighbourhood of Manhattan. It was at once an idea and a place, founded by two architects, an art critic and the present researcher in the role of cultural organizer. Since its beginning, Plexus was conceived as an interdisciplinary and multicultural project committed to the achievement of a heightened understanding of alternatives enhancing human experience.

Over these years, Plexus aim was achieved through the organization and documentation of large international collaborative arts events, *Plexus art co-operas*, situating art in an expanded community and heterogeneous multicultural environments, which involved, on some occasions, hundreds of artists and scientists, from different parts of the world. In these events, fully financed by the participants themselves, without grants or market support, Plexus encouraged face to face dialogue and creative also critical interaction among all participants. It still continues to move so today.

Artists, scientists, and audience, representing various cultures and ideologies, traversing separations of languages, disciplines, places, and individual differences, have created in *Plexus art co-operas* a complex multicultural art environment, bridging the community and the academy, and contributing to the development of an art form, expressly appropriate for today multicultural complex society. But, it would be difficult to label Plexus or group activities under existing art categories, especially because Plexus members intentionally refused art definitions.

Plexus Black Box was conceived in 1989 for the need of Plexus historical survival. The idea was to "freeze" Plexus and its activities metaphorically within a "black box," in order to be preserved for art history.

By "freezing" Plexus within a conceptual black box, Plexus players were projected in the future, defending the survival of the group, as well as their individual, collective, artistic and cultural identities. *Plexus Black Box* was a conscious act of artists running ahead toward their own future.

Being futural gives time, cultivates the present and allows the past to be repeated in how it is lived. With regard to time, this means that *the fundamental phenomenon of time is the future*. In order to see this without selling it as an interesting paradox, each specific Dasein must maintain itself in its running ahead. In so doing it becomes manifest that the original way of dealing with time is not a measuring.¹

Materially, *Plexus Black Box* consisted of records and relics from Plexus history and performances. Many records were compiled images made as frames of reference or quotes of other records. Over the years, Plexus events have built one upon the other. Through documentation, Plexus concepts, people and events, were linked together. Each event took place in its own present but it was made up of past concepts and activities while it projected its own various parts into the future activities of Plexus.

Therefore, the nature of *Plexus Black Box* was like a chain, with its concepts connected together and ultimately representing one total persistent purpose: the linkage of art to the community and to the notion of well-being.

Plexus Black Box was identified in 1990 by the researcher as the subject of his dissertation to complete his Ph.D. art education study at the New York University.

¹ Martin Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, p. 14E, 1992.

Statement of the Problem

Because the researcher was part of the Plexus founding group, and is still an active participant, one may ask how an “insider” can conduct an objective inquiry. One should quickly note, before rushing to an answer, that the most secure scientific knowledge is nevertheless grounded in intersubjective beliefs supported by publicly accessible evidences. Thus the supposed methodological problem was resolved by having “insider” accounts of events intersubjectively validated as constituent of the ongoing art project under study.

The researcher, as an “insider” of the project under study, applied the model of “the artist as researcher” outlined by David W. Ecker.²

Given the large number of participants, records and relics of the project under study, dispersed in many places without any inventory, the first step was to identify the primary sources. One main source was people. The researcher conducted a hermeneutical multicultural investigation on the primary sources of the study as “insider” views in order to investigate how in a critical aesthetic discourse they were related in *Plexus Black Box*.

Only recently “insider” accounts, starting from the controversial debate between “emics” and “etics,”³ have begun to be recognized by the scientific community. The “emic” model was consistent with the model of “the artist as researcher” as well as with the community-based identity of the project under study. It provided a unique insider understanding of *Plexus Black Box*, supplied by members of that community in which the project was placed, as a community-based art collaborative effort.

Further, to reinforce the objectivity of the study, an “etic” method was employed by the researcher through a series of phenomenological hermeneutical procedures of

²David W. Ecker, "The Artist as Researcher: The Role of the Artist in Advancing Living Traditions in Art", 1990.

³Thomas N. Headland, Kenneth L. Pike, Marvin Harris, eds, *Emics and Etics. The Insider/ Outsider Debate*, 1990.

interpretation, starting from his “stock of knowledge at hand,”⁴ as described in Chapter III.

In Chapter IV, he applied the “bifurcated writing”⁵ format from the deconstructionist Jacques Derrida to offer at the “outsider” interpreter the reading of “insider” understandings together with the researcher's own interpretation, placed at their margins, with no predominance of a single central point of interpretation. This “double reading” format allowed the “outsider” interpreter to perform, at the same time, his hermeneutical task of reading together “insider” recollections of Plexus participants and insights written at their margins by the researcher.

In Chapter V, it is presented an emic overall narrative of the history of *Plexus Black Box* by the researcher, providing a reflexive historical account as an “insider” of the project under study. At the end, in Chapter VI, a multicultural aesthetic interpretation of the project under study is derived by the researcher from his *close reading* of all insider narratives, reported in Chapters IV and V, and in Appendix A. His interpretation is not made as a conclusion, but as an open and critical aesthetic discourse moving from misunderstanding of the interwoven aesthetics of *Plexus Black Box* to its understanding as an open art form related to the complexity of contemporary art, within and outside the postmodern debate.

Delimitations and Definitions

Because the project under study was an ongoing activity, as delimitation, the inquiry was concluded with the event *A Contract to be Negotiated, Columbus Egg: The Living Plexus Black Box of “The Voyage of the Elisabeth,”* held on November 12, 1993, at the Rosenberg Gallery of New York University. There, through the packaging of

⁴Alfred Schutz, *Reflections on the Problem of Relevance*, p. 66, 1970.

⁵Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, p. 42, 1981.

artifacts from previous events, symbolically Plexus was sealed in two containers, collectively named *Plexus Black Box*.

Due to the large number of Plexus participants living in different parts of the world, the researcher delimited his field research on the collection and interpretation of recollections only of those which were identified from records and relics of *Plexus Black Box* sealed at the Rosenberg Gallery, and artists who participated in more than one Plexus event. In this study, no attempt was made by the researcher to make a formal analysis of Plexus art works.

The following definitions will provide an initial grasp on the focus of the research.

Actual interest: is a form of relevance; the determination by the subject of the conditions under which the task of translating the unfamiliar into familiar terms is to be considered as solved; it depends on the circumstances and the situation within which the problems have arisen, and also upon the system of problems to which the specific one pertains.⁶

Aesthetics: is a field of study which is understood to include all studies of the arts and related types of experience from philosophic, scientific, or other theoretical standpoints, including those of psychology, sociology, anthropology, cultural history, art criticism, and education. "The arts" include the visual arts, literature, music, and theater arts.⁷

Art: is a projection of the participant's own culture-bound aesthetic experience.

Community: is a social context defined by its participants.

Community-Based Art Education: is a participatory effort to build a community which is infused with the arts. The essential difference between Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE) and Community-Based Art Education (CBAE) is that DBAE operates from "top down," presumably people in higher education know enough to

⁶Alfred Schutz, *Reflections on the Problem of Relevance*, p. 28, 1970.

⁷From the definition of the term "aesthetics" published in all issues of the Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism.

set the categories, the methods, the subjects-matters, the contents and the objectives for all modes of education. This puts art education in the hands of the professors. CBAE presumably operates from "bottom up," the meaning of bottom does not refer to lower but it means more basic, in the sense of community, which would of course include art professors as members of the community.⁸

Emic: is an "insider" account, description, or analysis expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the native members of the culture whose beliefs and behaviors are being studied.⁹

Etic: is an "outsider" account, description, or analysis expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the community of scientific observers.¹⁰

Familiarity: is something inherent to the already experienced things we speak of as familiar to us; the habit of the subject in recognizing, identifying, and choosing actual experiences under the types at hand in his actual stock of knowledge.¹¹

Interpretative relevance: is a form of relevance, in virtue of which something is constituted as familiar by coherent types of previous experiences with which it might be compared.¹²

Living Traditions in Art: is a domain of aesthetic inquiry whose subject matter is located by its participants in terms of its qualities of significance to them.¹³ For the purpose of this investigation only a nominal definition is appropriate given the diversity and complexity of artistic activities of all the cultures involved.

⁸ David W. Ecker, notes, Summer Institute on the Living Traditions in Art, New York University, November 15, 1993.

⁹ James Lett, "Emics and Etics: Notes on the Epistemology of Anthropology" in *Emics and Etics. The Insider!/Outsider Debate*, eds. Thomas N. Headland, Kenneth L. Pike, Marvin Harris, p. 130, 1990.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 130-131.

¹¹ Alfred Schutz, *Reflections on the Problem of Relevance*, p. 25, 1970.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹³ David W. Ecker, notes, Summer Institute on the Living Traditions in Art, New York University, November 15, 1993.

Multicultural Art Education: is a participation in the artistic activity of another culture for the purpose of understanding it on its own terms.¹⁴

Reflexivity: is a capacity of any system of signification to turn back upon itself, to make itself its own object by referring to itself: subject and object fuse.¹⁵

Stock of knowledge at hand: is the sedimentation of various previous activities of our mind, and these are guided by systems of prevailing actually operative relevances of different kinds.¹⁶

The Need for the Inquiry

Plexus has generated since 1982 numerous art events which are a significant but as yet an unexamined part of the contemporary history of art and there was no a comprehensive account of Plexus. More than 500 artists from all over the world have participated in this ongoing art project, and there has been not yet scholarly examination of these art activities.

Over a period of twenty five years Plexus evolved to its present status as an international collaborative interdisciplinary effort, where the notion of well-being has emerged as the link between art and the community.

In times where in individual and cultural identification are a paramount concern to all ethnic groups and with small countries emerging after years of suppression to grasp the possibilities in global participation, this multicultural interpretative study seems of particular significance. In a multicultural environment, where different values and cultures are under the risk to clash, the study of the multicultural aesthetic aspects of *Plexus Black Box*, as an international community-based effort, should prove to be invaluable for understanding how members of different cultures may communicate in spite of their different languages, and their cultural/political

¹⁴ David W. Ecker, " Cultural Identity, Artistic Empowerment, and the Future of Art in the Schools," *Design for Arts in Education*, p. 15, 1990.

¹⁵ Barbara Myerhoff and Jay Ruby, *Crack in the Mirror: Reflexive Perspectives in Anthropology*, p. 2, 1982.

¹⁶ Alfred Schutz, *Reflections on the Problem of Relevance*, p. 66, 1970.

separations. *Plexus Black Box* was an example of an art form that reinforced the individual while collaborating in group events. Contributions by artists coming from a vast mix of cultures, many of them at the *margins* of the Artworld were of a very disparate nature, and Plexus with its underlying open structure accommodated them all.

Creating alternative channels of communication among different cultural groups, connecting centers and margins, and bridging in several occasion the academy and the community, Plexus has provided a ground for individuals of different fields and cultures to make original contributions in the development of an international identification having its beginning in a community-based art project.

There is a great need to understand the characteristics of an art project of this kind, made as an open art form that relates specifically to the needs of our times. In different parts of the world, Plexus events have brought scientists, artists, community activists and audience together in one place, as multicultural participants, crossing separations, categorizations, and classifications. The cross-disciplinary nature of Plexus is directed against specialization and fragmentation. The concept of the project under study and the activities of Plexus can assist in the creation of a new multicultural environment for learning in art education.

Because of the specialisation and fragmentation in our society, it is important that we integrate all aspects of education in order to strengthen the underlying unifying elements and ensure communication. No discipline can any longer afford to be insular; although this does not imply that its special quality will be sacrificed and lost in a vague amalgam of learning. Gradually--one hopes not too gradually--concepts new and unfamiliar to many educators--informality, new roles for teachers, shared power with children and the community, the necessity for creative expression--will be absorbed into our institutions and lead public education out of its present impasse.¹⁷

The purpose of the project under study was to reinforce a survival dialogue on the issue of among artists, as individuals, in separated communities of different cultures, classes, and genders, in different parts of the world, context-bound within the community-based environment in which they lived. This study attempts to respond by a careful cultural and artistic interpretation of the emerging interest in the issue of

¹⁷ Angiola Churchill, *Art for Preadolescents*, p. 407, 1970.

cultural identity and multiculturalism through an understanding of the Plexus concept of *the artist in the first person*. It clarifies how the artist was able *in the first person* to preserve in Plexus her/his sense of individuality while being a member of a collaborative effort.

Plexus Black Box evolved in many places, but grew, mainly in the art communities of New York, Rome, Dakar, Cagliari (Sardinia), and Amsterdam. In each location, Plexus activities developed according to the specific characteristics of the environment and the cultural aspects of that particular community and dealing with the challenging multicultural issue of crossing cultural borders and bridging centers and margins.

Most of us cross cultural borders every day, usually unconsciously. Assuming a dynamic rather than a passive role for the arts in society, one of my goals is to raise these daily encounters – at least in the realm of language and imagery – to a conscious level....as I began to live outside New York, outside urban centers for more than half of each year, and began to experience firsthand the relationship of the provincial New York artworld to the so-called “regions.” The subject of the relationship between perceived center and margins in the United States is both unavoidable and curiously unapproachable, veiled as it is by the rhetoric of democracy and liberal “multiculturalism.”¹⁸

In Plexus activities, as a consequence of its multicultural approach, new forms, languages and ideas arose from the interaction between Plexus art process and surrounding environment.

The first great consideration is that life goes on in an environment; not merely in it but because of it, through interaction with it. No creature lives merely under its skin; its subcutaneous organs are means of connection with what lies beyond its bodily frame, and to which, in order to live, it must adjust itself, by accommodation and defence but also by conquest. At every moment, the living creature is exposed to dangers from its surroundings, and at every moment, it must draw upon something in its surroundings to satisfy its needs. The career and destiny of a living being are bound up with its interchanges with its environment, not externally but in the most intimate way.¹⁹

Plexus art co-operas were made by artists and scientists interacting together and with the environment that had in common the need to research new forms of expression, moving through boundaries and limits of closed fields and disciplines, for a better understanding on human environment.

¹⁸ Lucy Lippard, *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America*, p. 6-7, 1990.

¹⁹ John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, p. 13, 1980.

The long-standing division between science and art is one of attitude. We learn to identify with one more than the other, know more about one than the other. The knowledge, associations, and comfort we find with what is familiar tends to make us uncomfortable, alienated, and often distrustful of the other. Both science and art are attempts to understand humanity and environment, and both give us valuable, useful information. In art education they have to be used together.²⁰

Plexus Black Box originated as a survival need from the critical dialogues of Plexus participants, artists and scientists, about their participation in the 1992 Christopher Columbus cultural navigation event, focused on the challenging issues of “reconciliation, art and well-being.”

Could we bring biologist and humanists together in one place for the enhancement each could have upon the other and thereby further guide the course of human history? How long could we keep the epistemology of science and the epistemology of human experience apart without jeopardising our future through failing to realise the importance of science and art have for each other?²¹

The significance of a study of this kind of project is made by its collaborative attempt to raise the consciousness in the community about the interdependence of art and well-being, a critical issue for the survival of humankind in its current critical path. Plexus has organized several international events on the theme of the “well being in the XXI Century,” related documents are reported in Appendix B.

From the early ‘60s through the late ‘80s, artists as well as scientists have significantly challenged their perspectives about the nature and purpose of their artistic or scientific methods. This study should serve to elucidate and to bring a better understanding to the artistic processes which in the mid ‘80s and mid ‘90s have characterized *Plexus Black Box*, and to which extent Plexus artistic process can be considered as an art form. The structure and concepts of *Plexus Black Box* were conceived as an emerging form of art expression, more democratic and appropriate for a multicultural art world, where voices not usually heard, at the margins of the Western modern aesthetic theories, had an opportunity to speak.

²⁰ June King McFee and Rogena M. Degge, *Art, Culture, and Environment: A Catalyst for Teaching*, p. 322, 1977.

²¹ Jonas Salk, “The Next Evolutionary Step in the Ascent of Man in the Cosmos”, *Leonardo* 18, p. 238, 1985.

The main characteristic of Plexus *Black Box* was like an accumulation of ideas on a theme created by artists about subjects of interest to them, with materials of all kinds claimed appropriate for them and where the ordinary standards of modernism or any other “*ism*,” claimed significant by the established art world, were had not taken into consideration. As a result, in Plexus there was a crossing of traditional boundaries of criticism and existing art definitions, labels and art categories.

Plexus works of arts were exhibited outside the frames and realms of museums, galleries and other conventional and commercial institutions. They were addressed more to create participation in terms of life and social issues than to address “*art for the sake of art*.” In the ‘60s and in the ‘70s artists chose to break art making conventions, Plexus artists in the ‘80s also turned their backs on established art expression, their art was not only no-traditional, but also no-saleable.

Many events of Plexus took place in communities or at historic sites where social crimes had been perpetuated. There, records and relics of Plexus were packaged as works of art, in the form of multi-media installations and postmodern ritual art performances.

Since 1986, Plexus is promoting the opening of an Art World Bank in Goree-Dakar, next to the historical House of the Slaves that in 1991 was acknowledged by Moustapha Ka, minister of culture of Senegal, in a letter to the researcher as a Plexus participant, fully reported in Appendix B.

I would like to express to you my satisfaction for the "heureuse" (positive) project that you have taken in direction to the dialogue of cultures and in a better understanding among all people of the world.

The community-based art project under study underlined the need to fight against the slavery of the “isms” in art through a new open participatory art paradigm made by the artists of the community.

I believe what we will see in the new few years is a new paradigm based on the notion of participation, in which art will begin to redefine itself in terms of social relatedness and ecological healing, so that artists will gravitate toward different activities, attitudes and roles than those that operated under the aesthetics of modernism.²²

²² Suzi Gablick , *The Reenchantment of Art*, p. 27, 1991.

Method

The researcher employed the model of “the artist as researcher,” outlined by David Ecker in “The Artist as Researcher: The Role of the Artist in Advancing Living Traditions in Art”²³ and articulated during his *Living Traditions in Art* graduate courses and seminars at New York University.

The first sequences of procedural steps outlined by this model were: reading the primary sources in the literature; writing an annotated bibliography; studying examples of medium or genre in museums; knowing insiders of the field; developing files of articles, newspaper clippings, reproductions, etc.; writing a glossary of technical terms; writing an outline of the proposed field research; asking for critiques by insiders and outsiders of the field; re-writing and revising the outlining of the field research.

As artist-researchers their field research typically involves observation of artistic activity in its cultural setting, interviews with artists, participation in the activity if possible, recording of events on tape or film, taking notes during or following events, and so on, until they have the knowledge, skills, or critical judgments that advance the art in some way.²⁴

As an “insider,” in order to accomplish such a task of describing the large quantity of information that he started to collect since 1986 as part of his field research, the researcher kept his records in a series of chronological notebooks, written as a field research diary, which was not a simple task, as Malinowski points out in his controversial *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*.

I also thought about problems of keeping a diary. How immensely difficult it is to formulate the endless variety of things in the current of a life. Keeping a diary as a problem of psychological analysis is: to isolate the essential elements, to classify them (from what point of view?), then, in describing them indicate more or less clearly what is their actual importance at the given moment, proportion; my subjective reaction, etc.²⁵

²³ David W. Ecker, “The Artist as Researcher: The Role of the Artist in Advancing Living Traditions in Art”, 1990.

²⁴ David W. Ecker, “The Possibility of a Multicultural Art Education”, p. 15, 1986.

²⁵ Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*, p. 247, 1989.

The researcher first examined all Plexus sources available, dating back to 1982. Then, he started to identify and organise in a chronological order the primary sources of *Plexus Black Box*.

The procedures for historical researches described by Barzun and Graff in *The Modern Researcher*²⁶ were used by the researcher to organise various documents within a chronological categorical inventory made by records as intentional transmitters of fact, and relics as unpremeditated transmitters of fact. His need for accuracy made him double-check all sources that he used, through verification procedures such as the comparison of copies with sources, one of the fundamental ways of verifying complex facts, together with disentanglement, identification and clarification procedures, to verify the attribution of a name to a source as described by Barzun and Graff.²⁷ Verification procedures were useful to double control the outline of a chronological and categorical inventory of Plexus primary sources. Following these verification procedures, he identified and organised records and relics from Plexus events made from 1982 to the present, consistently related to the study, identifying if there was an underlying theme or themes, unifying them into a single non stop event. Various documents related to several different events are being studied as part of one single stream of the project under study.

The researcher contacted all available Plexus participants, within the delimitation of the study, to ask their recollections. He sent a letter to them requesting their participation, and by phone he solicited their recollections. Few participants answered with their written recollection. The gap was filled by the researcher who managed to record their oral recollections and make transcripts of them. Applying the model of “the artist as researcher,” he made room for suggestions and criticism by giving their transcriptions to the participants for their approval before presenting them in this dissertation. To accomplish it,, he followed also the procedural field steps described by Edward Bruner.

²⁶ Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff, *The Modern Researcher*, p. 165-166, 1985.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 109-144.

First we tell the people why we are there, what information we are seeking, and how we intend to use the data. We do this directly, by explaining our project and by our behaviour, by the questions we ask and the activities we attend. As the people respond to our questions, we begin the ethnographic dialogue, the complex interactions and exchanges that lead to the negotiation of the text. In the second telling we take this verbal and visual information and process it, committing it to writing in our field diaries. This transcription is not easy. There is necessarily a dramatic reduction, condensation and fragmentation of data. In the third telling the audience consists of our colleagues, who provide feedback as we prepare our materials for publication and here the story becomes even more prominent. There is, of course, a fourth telling-when other anthropologists read what we have written and summarise it in class lectures and in their own publication.²⁸

But, aware that he had to cast his multicultural investigation with the community-based nature of art project under study, he modified the 3rd “etic” telling step of Bruner by inserting first the “emic” move of bringing back collected data to their sources, in this case to the community of Plexus participants, to be “emically” validated through their verification. Only after the accomplishment of this “emic” step, he moved forward to the Bruner’s “etic” step to bring the data to the scientific community for their feedbacks.

The researcher in accomplishing this field research acknowledged the coauthorship contribution offered by the “insiders” as Bruner claims by recognizing narrative ethnographies as coauthored works between the anthropologist and his informants.

Our ethnographies are coauthored, not simply because informants contribute data to the text, but because, as I suggested earlier, ethnographer and informant come to share the same narratives.²⁹

Dealing with the question of the coauthorship and of the sharing participation between insiders and outsiders, within their “emic” and “etic” distinction, it raised up the challenging problem of the separation of identity between subject of the research and the object of the research.

We wonder if it is their story or ours. Which is the inside and which the outside view, and what about the distinction between emic and etic?...Some scholars make a sharp distinction between the ethnographer as subject and the native peoples as the object of an investigation. To the extent that we see the ethnographer as an outsider looking in, the privileged stranger who can perceive patterns not apparent to those within the system, then we further magnify the separation between anthropologist as subject and indigene as object. We have long recognized that it is difficult to obtain an accurate description of the object, to know the true nature of the outside world....We

²⁸ Edward M. Bruner, “Ethnography as Narrative”, p. 147-148, 1986.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 148.

have recognized a problem with the subject, the anthropologist, but this tends to dissolve into details of personal bias, individual personality traits, and selective perception-after all, we are only human. We also have dealt with subject-object relations in another way, by suggesting that the object of our ethnography is constituted by a Western mode of thought, by our language, and that we have created the category of the native or the concept of the primitive.³⁰

The researcher recognized the coauthorship of all Plexus insiders who shared with him their experiences and contributed with their “emic” understanding to make this multicultural study feasible and their “emic” accounts, reported in Chapter IV, Chapter VI and Appendix A, were perceived as primary sources of his multicultural study.

An emic unit, in my view, is a physical or mental system treated by insiders as relevant to their system of behavior and as the same emic unit in spite of etic variability....Appropriateness of an emic unit includes the feature of its relevant occurrence in relation to the total cultural pattern of an individual or society (e.g., involving the purposes of a person in relation to the set of philosophical presuppositions shared with his or her culture). And such a patterned whole is itself a high-level emic unit (e.g., an emic world view, or the structure of an individual's activities and attitudes as related to a discipline such as anthropology).³¹

The researcher followed the claim by Pike that it is possible for an insider to apply both “emic” and “etic” procedures.

I view the emic knowledge of a person's local culture somewhat as Polanyi views bicycle riding. A person knows how to act without necessarily knowing how to analyze his action. When I act, I act as an insider; but to know, in detail, how I act (e.g., the muscle movements), I must secure help from an outside disciplinary system. To *use* the emics of nonverbal (or verbal) behavior I must act like an insider; to *analyze* my own acts, I must look at (or listen to) material as an outsider. But just as the outsider can learn to act like an insider, so the insider can learn to analyze like an outsider.³²

Marvin Harris argues, in dealing with the validity of Pike's claim, on the feasibility of “insiders” becoming “outsiders” and of “outsiders” becoming “insiders.”

I have always stressed the feasibility, indeed the tactical necessity, of training participants to carry out etic observation. And like Pike, I regard the ability of the outsider to talk, think, and act like an insider (as judged by insider) to be a hallmark of an emic account. Perhaps what Pike is getting at is the distinction between observers and participants as mutable categories. If so, I would disagree on the ground that observers constitute a scientific community whose status is not normally altered by learning how to talk, or act like the

³⁰ Ibid., p. 149.

³¹ Thomas N. Headland, Kenneth L. Pike, and Marvin Harris (eds.), *Emics and Etics. The Insider/Outsider Debate*, p. 28-29, 1990

³² Ibid., p. 33-34.

people they are studying. Normally, what happens is that they simply become better observers.³³

The researcher managed the methodological problem of interpreting “insider” accounts of Plexus participants by combining “emic” and “etic” procedures, “as not part of a rigid dichotomy but often present the same data from two points of view.”³⁴

The researcher as an “insider” employed a “reflexive double mirror” attitude, as it is pointed out by Barbara Myerhoff and Jay Ruby, to try to gain the necessary detachment from the object of his study.

Without the acute understanding, the detachment from the process in which one is engaged, reflexivity does not occur. Merely holding up a single mirror is not adequate to achieve this attitude. The mirrors must be doubled, creating the endless regress of possibilities, opening out into infinity, dissolving the clear boundaries of a “real world.”³⁵

The researcher following this “reflexive double mirror” attitude used both perspectives in managing the field research of this study. Methodologically, he started as an “outsider observer” by organizing, with an etic behaviour, his research and of its field, then as an “insider participant” he moved to an “emic” understanding, making a relevant shift of paradigm that provided a solution to the methodological problem stated in the beginning.

As a consequence of the general crisis of the contemporary scientific thought, the shift of paradigms in ethnographical inquiries was related to a crisis of description and of representation.

The two related characteristics of this crisis are, first, disarray in attempts to build general and historically comprehensive theories that would subsume all piecemeal research, and second, a widespread perception of a fundamentally changing world for which tried-and-true “base” concepts that have served empirical research, such as class, culture, the social actor, among others, no longer work as well. The consequences for the individual scholar have been twofold. First, he has assumed responsibility for defining the significance of his own particular projects the general theoretical umbrella of justification of the field no longer adequately does this. Theory and purpose in research are thus far more personalized, and this defines the experimental quality of both ethnography and other related kinds of writing in contemporary genres of cultural criticism. And second, cultural critics focus in on details of social life to

³³ Ibid., p. 77.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 87.

³⁵ Barbara Myerhoff and Jay Ruby, *A Crack in the Mirror: Reflexive Perspectives in Anthropology*, p. 3, 1982.

find in them a redefinition of the phenomena to be explained in uncertain times, and thus to reconstruct fields from the bottom up, from the problem of description (or really of representation) back to general theory which has grown out of touch with the world on which it seeks to comment.³⁶

During historical times having had a crisis of representation, like the contemporary period in which we live and under which *Plexus Black Box* has originated, there is a shift of paradigms. This shift occurs when they are insufficient to deal with the crisis, not offering a secure solution of the problem at hand which eludes dominant theories and paradigms. Paradigms then lose their authority and legitimacy. Thomas S. Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* points out that the crises are “a necessary precondition” for new theories to emerge and challenge scientists to confront themselves with “anomalies” and to provide answers to contemporary questions raised by the cultural crisis of our times and the shifting of paradigms.

Previously, we had principally examined the paradigm's role as a vehicle for scientific theory. In that role it functions by telling the scientist about the entities that nature does and does not contain and about the ways in which those entities behave. That information provides a map whose details are elucidated by mature scientific research. And since nature is too complex and varied to be explored at random, that map is as essential as observation and experiment to science's continuing development. Through the theories they embody, paradigms prove to be constitutive of the research activity. They are also; however, constitutive of science in other respects, and that is now the point. In particular, our most recent examples show that paradigms provide scientists not only with a map but also with some of the directions essential for map-making. In learning a paradigm the scientist acquires theory, methods, and standards together, usually in an inextricable mixture. Therefore, when paradigms change, there are usually significant shifts in the criteria determining the legitimacy both of problems and of proposed solutions.³⁷

The researcher changed his methodological field procedures at hand by moving from an “etic” perspective to an “emic” closer to the nature of a multicultural study and in particular to this study and of the “insider” identity of the researcher. This shift of perspective also changed his view on “insider” sources.

Led by a new paradigm, scientists adopt new instruments and look in new places. Even more important, during this revolutions scientists see new and different things when looking with familiar instruments in places they have looked before. It is rather as if the professional community had been

³⁶ George E. Marcus and Michael M. J. Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique. An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*, p. 118, 1986.

³⁷ Thomas S. Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p. 109, 1970.

suddenly transported to another planet where familiar objects are seen in a different light and are joined by unfamiliar ones as well.³⁸

Plexus insider accounts provided to the researcher this kind of shift of perspective, described by Kuhn, which sometimes from an outsider understanding is not understandable. Following this “emic” understanding, he started to become more aware of the relevance of the insiders accounts to understand the project under study as an “end,” a final result, of the Plexus qualitative problem solving creative process.

The relevance of “insider” accounts in understanding the artistic process as a series of problems and resolutions is described by David Ecker in “The Artistic Process as Qualitative Problem Solving.”

My interest in artists’ discourse is methodological. By this I mean to indicate that my problem is one of formulating warranted generalizations about the controlled process of artistic production. These perspectives may be usefully merged. A close examination of the shop talk and the work of the studio will provide certain data about the process of constructing an art object. These generalizations will be expanded to a level of abstraction inclusive of the immediacies of any given artistic production. I will call the latter qualitative problem solving. It is my contention that careful study of what painters do when ordering their artistic means and ends, as well as to what they say they are doing, will provide the bases for significantly improving our generalisations about education in the arts. If it is possible to describe the artistic as a series of problems and their controlled resolution, the ensuing generalization may be of no small consequence to the teaching of art.³⁹

The investigation of the artistic process through which originated *Plexus Black Box* was perceived by the researcher as “a problem-solution-problem continuum,” therefore a qualitative problem solving.

By extending this analysis of qualitative relationships it is conceivable that the history of art could be viewed as a record of the highest achievements of man's qualitative problem solving behaviour. If this conception of the art process as a problem-solution-problem continuum is warranted by the qualitative evidence of art history, much of the shop talk between artists is verbal evidence. For shop talk is largely a by product of their mutual problems of painting or sculpting. The words incorporated into this shop talk have common sense meanings, or, rather, sense common to fellow artists...The things dealt with by such language are what I choose to call the means and ends of artistic production, the *qualities* artists manipulate, orchestrate, modify, and create in solving their problems.⁴⁰

³⁸ Ibid., p. 111

³⁹ David Ecker, “The Artistic Process as Qualitative Problem Solving,” *Journal of Aesthetic and Criticism* 21/3, p. 284, 1963.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 285.

The researcher, since 1986, following as an “insider” the artistic process from which originated in 1989 *Plexus Black Box*, kept a phenomenological approach in writing his notes.

First, we attend as completely and as fully as possible to the object or event presented. Second, we write out a full description of the experience we just had. Third, we edit what we have written to indicate what upon further reflection we consider to be the essential character of the experience.⁴¹

The researcher was conscious of the fact that such a continuous inquiry on Plexus and on what in Plexus he was doing as Plexus 23s, which was his “insider” identity as Plexus international coordinator as well as a founder, was interfering with the natural process of the Plexus art project. In the beginning of Plexus networking artistic development, each participant chose a number of individual identification. Historical founders chose this individual identification code number in order to underline the individual identity of the artist in the context of the group. The researcher as an “insider” was aware of the correlation between object and subject as well as of relevant interferences in scientific investigations made by the same investigation tools.

In traditional philosophies, a distinction is usually made between object and the subject that knows the object. Husserl transformed this distinction into a correlation of what is experienced with its mode of being experienced.⁴²

The researcher was aware of the need to have at the beginning of his inquiry a radical suspicion of the immediate validity of his methodological interpretative approach.

Our efforts at understanding can be seen from the point of view of the suspicion that our first approach - as a prescientific one - is not valid and that consequently we need the help of scientific methods to overcome our first impressions.⁴³

The researcher as interpreter as well as an “insider” had his own historicity which pointed to a specific angle of interpretation, “an interpretative participation,” as Gadamer states in *The Hermeneutics of Suspicion* determined by a widespread and ongoing cultural processes of understanding, made by approximation and the

⁴¹ David W. Ecker, ed., *Instituting Qualitative Evaluation in the Arts*, p.14, 1981

⁴² Don Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology. An Introduction*, p. 42, 1979.

⁴³ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Hermeneutics of Suspicion*, p. 58, 1984.

overcoming of errors, in which the identity of the interpreter is always partly constitutive of this hermeneutical process of understanding.

"Participation" is a strange word. Its dialectic consists of the fact that participation is not taking parts, but in a way taking the whole. Everybody who participates in something does not take something away, so that the others cannot have it. The opposite is true: by sharing, by our participating in the things in which we are participating, we enrich them; they do not become smaller, but larger. The whole life of tradition consists exactly in this enrichment so that life is our culture and our past: the whole inner store of our lives is always extending by participating.⁴⁴

"No method can transcend the interpreter's own historicity, even if we can achieve distance, we actually interpret an interpretation," it is argued by Gadamer who claims that "interpretation" points in a specific direction, rather than to open to any other variety of directions. Each interpretation is placed within its own historical context, a world made by a particular time and space. Gadamer further points out the ambiguity of "interpretation."

We may well ask whether we can interpret such ambiguity except by revealing that ambiguity. This brings us right back to our question concerning the particular connection between composition and interpretation within the overall relationship between the activity of interpretation and the activity of artistic creation. Art demands interpretation because of its inexhaustible ambiguity. It cannot be satisfactorily translated in terms of conceptual knowledge.⁴⁵

Gadamer describes the historical shifting in hermeneutics as a theory of interpretation since when it was applied as "a technique for overcoming difficulties in troublesome texts."

What has to be held up as a first determination that will do justice to modern hermeneutics in contrast to the traditional kind is this notion that a philosophical hermeneutics is more interested in the questions than the answers - or better, that it interprets statements as answers to questions that it is its role to understand. That is not all. Where does our effort to understand begin? Why are we interested in understanding a text or some experience of the world, including our doubts about patent self-interpretations? Do we have a free choice about these things? Is it at all true that we follow our own free decision whenever we try to investigate or interpret certain things? Free decision? A neutral, completely objective concern? At least the theologian would surely have objections here and say, "Oh no!"⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 64.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 69.

⁴⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science*, p. 106, 1992.

The endlessness of the task of the hermeneutical procedures in approaching the interpretation of a text is further pointed out by Gadamer:

This first step of hermeneutic endeavor, especially the requirement of going back to the motivating questions when understanding statements, is not a particularly artificial procedure. On the contrary, it is our normal practice. If we have to answer a question and we cannot understand the question correctly (but we do know what the other wants to know), then we obviously have to understand better the sense of the question. And so we ask in return why someone would ask us that. Only when I have first understood the motivating meaning of the question can I even begin to look for an answer. It is not artificial in the least to reflect upon the presuppositions implicit in our questions. On the contrary, it is quite artificial to imagine that statements fall down from heaven and that they can be subjected to analytic labor without once bringing into consideration why they were stated and in what way they are responses to something. That is the first, basic, and infinitely far-reaching demand called for in any hermeneutical undertaking. Not only in philosophy or theology but in any research project, it is required that one elaborates an awareness of the hermeneutic situation.⁴⁷

Gadamer clearly claims that the elaboration of this awareness of the hermeneutical situation at hand requires the insight understanding of its endless process.

The elaboration of the hermeneutic situation, which is the key to methodical interpretation, has a unique element to it. The first guiding insight is to admit of the endlessness of this task. To imagine that one might ever attain full illumination as to his motives or his interests in questions is to imagine something impossible. In spite of this, it remains a legitimate task to clarify what lies at the basis of our interests as far as possible. Only then are we in a position to understand the statements with which we are concerned, precisely insofar as we recognize our own question in them...The task of understanding is not merely that of clarifying the deepest unconscious grounds motivating our interest but above all that of understanding and explicating them in the direction and limits indicated by our hermeneutic interest.⁴⁸

Gadamer further challenges the idea of the validity of the scientific method.

It was especially the idea of method, or of securing the path of knowledge in accord with the guiding ideal of certainty, that brought a unified meaning of knowing and knowledge to the fore. This meaning no longer stood in the taken-for-granted context of the tradition of our earlier knowledge of the world.⁴⁹

The researcher, to deal with his experience of *Plexus Black Box* and with those of other Plexus insiders, performed an ongoing first-hand phenomenological understanding of the complex of questions raised by this study, following before a

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 107

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 108.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 156, 1992

series of operational rules to be made in the first level of a phenomenological investigation as described by Don Ihde.

The first operational rule, then, is to attend to the phenomena of experience as they appear. A parallel rule, which makes attention more rigorous, may be stated in Wittgensteinian form: *Describe, don't explain...*⁵⁰

Idhe points out as second rule the delimitation of the field of experience:

What is important to note at this juncture is that one must carefully delimit the field of experience in such a way that the focus is upon describable experience as it shows itself.⁵¹

The third rule for Idhe is the *horizontalization* of all phenomena as "equally real' within the limits of their givenness."

This procedure prevents one from deciding too quickly that some things are more real or fundamental than other things.⁵²

Idhe, introducing the second level of a phenomenological investigation by looking for the essential features of the phenomena referred not just as particularities, points out the fourth hermeneutic rule as "seek out structural or invariant features of the phenomena" and further describes "phenomenological reductions" as methodological devices to clear the field. "So far, I have been discussing *phenomenological reductions*, those methodological devices that clear the field and specify how it is to be approached."⁵³

The phenomenological procedure of the "*epoché*" is pointed out by Ecker, Johnson and Kaelin, as "a device for distinguishing relevant from irrelevant statements about the nature of the aesthetic object."

American phenomenologists, in particular Kaelin, have interpreted Husserl's *epoché* as a technique for establishing relevance in statements of criticism. As Husserl developed the technique, practicing the "phenomenological epoché" entailed the suspension of what he called the "natural attitude." This latter term is used to refer to the life conditions of ordinary humans relating to the objects of their natural environment, interpreted either through the categories of common sense or of scientific explanation.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Don Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology. An Introduction*, p. 34, 1979.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 35-36.

⁵² Ibid., p. 37.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 41.

⁵⁴ David W. Ecker, Thomas J. Johnson and Eugene F. Kaelin, "Aesthetic Inquiry", *Review of Educational Research* 39, p. 583-584, 1969.

The epoché technique allows the subject to suspend his natural attitude in describing an object and to attend merely to the qualities of the object in question as they appear to one's conscious attention.

Therefore, by "bracketing out" all the non-phenomenal characteristics of the appearances of the natural object such as its species, any of its supposed causes, or putative explanations associated with its existence, one is left with what John Dewey referred to as the "felt quality of the immediate"...The function of the *epoché* is to close off all irrelevancies that may occur to an appreciator as he attends to the qualitative base of the aesthetic expression before him. To practice the *epoché*, one is enjoined from referring to the properties of the object qua physical or to any other associations which his perception may invoke, but which are not controlled by the qualitative structure he perceives.⁵⁵

Maxine Sheets-Johnstone points out that the hermeneutical phenomenological approach is a mode of inquiry valid for what concerns "to trace out foundational connections at the heart of the phenomenon" such as beginnings, endings, and passages referring to the history of art.

To do a phenomenological-hermeneutical study, one must be in touch with actual lived experiences of the phenomenon one is investigating and with the beliefs, attitudes, and values surrounding those experiences; it is through an analysis of first-hand accounts of beliefs, attitudes, values, and experiences that foundational changes in thinking and praxis are revealed.⁵⁶

As an insider already with his "stock of knowledge at hand" of Plexus *Black Box*, the researcher intentionally and continuously changed his way of looking at the sources.

A stock of knowledge at hand....[It] is the sedimentation of various previous activities of our mind, and these are guided by systems of prevailing actually operative relevances of different kinds. These activities lead to the acquisition of habitual knowledge which is dormant, neutralized, but ready at any time to be reactivated.⁵⁷

The researcher, following hermeneutical and phenomenological methodological procedures pointed out by Alfred Schutz, shifted continuously the focus of his attention, from misunderstanding to understanding, from the idea of the whole to the perception of the parts of it, going back and forward from the margins of his pre-known kernel as an insider of the project, in order to overcome the doubt of the

⁵⁵ Ibid., 584.

⁵⁶ Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, "Phenomenology as a Way of Illuminating Dance," p. 143, 1966.

⁵⁷ Alfred Schutz, *Reflections on the Problem of Relevance*, p. 66, 1970.

reliability of first impressions. Schutz refers to interpretative methodology as “the proper determination of what is interpretationally relevant with respect to a previously prevailing topic.”⁵⁸ As the sedimentation of various previous activities of his mind, the stock of knowledge at hand of the researcher as interpreter determined a system of interpretational, topical and motivational relevances, which had its roots in the sedimented experiences of the interpreter, upon which depended the process of understanding from misunderstanding. The system of relevances of the researcher prevailed at any particular autobiographical moment and set guides for actions by which his decisions on investigation were made, and which in turn determined the horizon of the thematic field of the research, bringing inside marginal material from the background.

Motivational relevances lead to the constitution of the "interest" situation, which in turn determines the systems of topical relevances. The latter bring material which was horizontal or marginal into the thematic field, thus determining the problems for thought and action for further investigation, selected from the background which is, ultimately, the world which is beyond question and taken for granted. These topical relevances also determine the level or limits for such investigation required for producing knowledge and familiarity for the problem at hand. Thus, the system of interpretational relevances becomes established, and this leads to the determination of the typicality of our knowledge.⁵⁹

In order to *grasp as such the living act of his experience*, the researcher in the preparatory procedures, as a necessary condition to challenge his first effort of understanding, performed a series of artificial voluntary acts of reflection to explore intrinsic relevant structures, which create several “provinces of reality” within he experienced *Plexus Black Box*.

Although experienced as a unity, what I am doing is not one single activity; it is rather a set of heterogeneous activities, each of them taking place in its own appropriate medium. This set of activities is itself structured into theme and horizon....It is the predominance of the theme which creates the apparent unification of this set of activities, and it bestows the main accent of reality upon the realm of theoretical contemplation....⁶⁰

58 Ibid., p. 129.

59 Ibid., p. 66.

60 Ibid., p. 10.

The researcher as his first step to identify what was thematic, following Schutz, selected in a serendipitous way one of the Plexus activities or provinces, in order to gain full attention, if only momentarily to start his reflection.

In truth we are always living and acting simultaneously in several of these provinces, and to select one can merely mean that we are making it so to speak our "home base," "our system of reference," our paramount reality in relation to which all others receive merely the accent of derived reality - namely, they become horizontal, ancillary, subordinate in relation to what is the prevailing theme.⁶¹

The researcher applied his "stock of knowledge at hand", as an insider of the project under study, by selecting, as first home base, the province of Plexus 23s, that was the identity under which the researcher as an insider operated in Plexus. It allowed him to assume the "counterpointal structure" and the "artificial split" of the unity of his personality, necessary to accomplish such a task as it is described by Schutz.

It is this "counterpointal structure" of our personality and therewith of our stream of consciousness which is the corollary of what has been called in other connections the *schizophrenic hypothesis of the ego* - namely the fact that in order to make something thematic and another thing horizontal we have to assume an artificial split of the unity of our personality.⁶²

The researcher started from the "actual interest" of Plexus 23s his analysis of the system of relevances, from the structurization of a voluntary "artificial" thematic center and surrounding horizontal margins made by other "insider" relevances.

In our mental activities we are directed exclusively toward the theme of the field of consciousness - that is, toward the problem we are concerned with, the object of our interest or attention, in short toward the topical relevances. Everything else is in the margin, the horizon, and especially all the habitual possessions we have called the stock of knowledge at hand. The motives for our actions are also in the margin of the field, whether the motives be of the in-order-to type (beyond or before the topically relevant theme) or the because type (which belongs essentially to our past and leads to the building up of the chain of in-order-to motives governing the determination of the theme or topic).⁶³

"The actual interest" of Plexus 23s followed by "the artist as researcher," depending upon his own autobiographical and situational circumstances, created the borderline of the segment placed under investigation. Schutz points out that there are not isolated questions, each is interrelated with the other, and are interpretationally

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 11.

⁶² Ibid., p. 12.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 67.

relevant those elements, implicit or hidden in the margin of the field, implicit in the inner and outer horizons of the topic, which in the ongoing process of reflection may become topically relevant of the thematic center or “kernel,” made by the sedimentation of an experience which has its own history.

It is also obvious that I may at any time turn to what is implicit or hidden in these horizons (to what is in the margin of the field) and bring such elements into the thematic kernel (i.e. make thematic what has been only operative or marginal).⁶⁴

In order to change the conditions of observation it was necessary for the researcher to act in such a way that the decision of how to act was part of a chain of interrelated motivational relevances, as Schutz points out “what has to be done is motivated by that for which it is to be done, the latter being motivationally relevant for the former.”

“The artist as researcher” had to learn to examine more carefully *Plexus Black Box*, from inside and outside his own understanding, in order to shift his attention of focus in such a way “that data, which were at the margins, could be drawn into the thematic kernel.” He had to “weigh” how new marginal materials produced in the course of his ongoing inside and outside actual process of understanding were interpretatively relevant, in order to determine the impact of circumstantial modifications in the thematic kernel. The system of relevances proposed by Schutz to deal with the problem of this interpretative decision as sedimentation of previous experiences was used by the researcher. Schutz claims that this system of interrelationships among types of relevances should not be experienced chronologically separated.

Our study thus shows that we cannot bestow a privileged position upon one of the three systems of relevances. On the contrary, any of them may become the starting point for bringing about changes in the other two.⁶⁵

The researcher, in order to gain more freedom from his stock of knowledge at hand, and aware of his first artificial selection performed at the beginning in selecting the kernel leading his methodological hermeneutical process, created continuously

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 68.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 70.

different observational conditions of looking for new insider additional interpretatively relevant materials, until when he felt to have sufficiently clarified and solved the problem at hand.

On the other hand, it is quite possible that a shift in the system of interpretational relevances - as with the introduction of a new concept - becomes the starting point for building up a set of new motivational or topical relevances which do not thus far pertain to the familiar stock of knowledge at hand.⁶⁶

Schutz claims that the distinction of three systems of relevances, as three aspects of a single set of a phenomenon, is useful in the clarification of the constitutive process of understanding: through the system of topical relevances, in the clarification of the concept of value and of the freedom of the interpreter in choosing the values by which to be guided; through the system of interpretational relevances, in the clarification of the verification, invalidation, and falsification of propositions; through the system of motivational relevances, in the clarification of the intersubjective understanding and personality structure.

The researcher, in accordance with the emic paradigm shift, “looked” at the collected “insider” accounts with a deconstructionist lens, overturning the hierarchical setting and looking by texts of Western philosophers, as Jacques Derrida claims “to deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment.”⁶⁷

The placing at the margins of texts interpretational accounts is for Derrida an effective deconstructive move to deal with the multiplicity of meanings.

Gnawing away at the border which would make this question into a particular case, they are to blur the line which separates a text from its controlled margin. They interrogate philosophy beyond its meaning, treating it not only as a discourse but as a determinate text inscribed in a general text, enclosed in the representation of its own margin. Which compels us not only to reckon with the entire logic of the margin, but also to take an entirely other reckoning: which is doubtless to recall that beyond the philosophical text there is not a blank, virgin, empty margin, but another text, a weave of differences of forces without any present center of reference.... and also to

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 70.

⁶⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, p. 41, 1981.

recall that the *written* text of philosophy (this time in its books) overflows and cracks its meaning.⁶⁸ (xxiii)

Therefore, to produce a valid multicultural study, by placing his interpretation at the margins of collected insider accounts, the researcher challenged methodologically the traditional and central hierarchical setting of Western modern philosophical inquiries, which give to the interpreter a dominant position. Conceiving this dominant position as a culturally context-bound one, the researcher presented as equally relevant all insider understandings as significant components of his multicultural hermeneutical aesthetic inquiry.

To deal with the problem of different levels of discourse in the project under study, the artist as researcher applied the Ecker - Kaelin's Taxonomy,⁶⁹ a model for relating responses to an artifact or an event and it seemed to the artist as researcher proper to be used in his study. The model encompasses 5 levels of inquiry and related activity: 1) Experiences with objects/events; art objects/events are perceived, performed, produced; 2) Criticism; aesthetic judgments are made and justified; 3) Aesthetic judgments are analysed and evaluated; 4) Theory; art and art criticism is explained; 5) Meta-theory; explanations are analysed and evaluated. These procedures could be followed at two or more of five levels, from the bottom to the top or vice versa.

In this study the researcher proceeded from *Plexus Black Box*, the event, to the top of the ladder. *Plexus Black Box* became the subject-matter on which the researcher grounded different, various and very often divergent inside accounts by Plexus participants. He looked at these experiences as starting points of his aesthetic inquiry identifying which invariant features were present in the various recollections of the experiences of the Plexus participants.

...it seems clear that the basic limit-found as that condition allowing communication between the various worlds of aesthetic experience-is to be located within the responses of these various subjects to a single aesthetic object. From this starting point we move to the second phase of our project, which is to show how, once a unique "object of criticism" has been isolated for

⁶⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, p. xxiii, 1982.

⁶⁹ David W. Ecker and Eugene F. Kaelin, "The Limits of Aesthetic Inquiry: A Guide to Educational Research", p. 258-286, 1972.

aesthetic contemplation, the use of language to describe or evaluate the art work affects what can be known through aesthetic inquiry.⁷⁰

The researcher grounded his multicultural interpretation upon a kind of emic-etic re-casting hermeneutic process, made by his “close reading” of insiders understandings reported in the last Chapter as direct quotes.

At the end of the study, as an open critical contribution, a multicultural understanding of *Plexus Black Box* was presented by the researcher not as a conclusion, but with an open end, because, he argued, it was about a still ongoing art project.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 266.

CHAPTER II

RELATED LITERATURE

Aesthetics, Hermeneutics and Deconstruction

Aesthetics, as philosophy of art, is a fairly recent Western philosophical discipline concerned with theoretical speculations on *art*. Originally, in the middle of the eighteenth century, it was formulated by Alexander Baumgarten as a philosophical discipline concerned with the whole region of human sensuous perception. In its original formulation, it was not referred to *art* but to the domain of human knowledge of perception and sensation which, in the context of the age of rationalism, was part of science. The need for aesthetics in the eighteenth century was stimulated by the rational development of science which imposed its models of investigation on other realms of human activity. The historical development of traditional modern aesthetics as a philosophy of art is the continuous tendency to frame *art* in a series of theories and definitions, reducing the role of *art* to a theoretical formalization.

"Each age, each art-movement, each philosophy of art, tries over and over again to establish the stated ideal only to be succeeded by a new or revised theory, rooted at least in part, in the repudiation of preceding ones,"⁷¹ Morris Weitz in *The Role of Theory in Aesthetic* argues against the possibility to define *art* by categories and opens the question of what is "art" as definition. The problem that Weitz raises is not "what is art" but "what sort of concept is art."

"Art," itself, is an open concept. New conditions (cases) have constantly arisen and will undoubtedly constantly arise; new art forms, new movements will emerge, which will demand decisions on the part of those interested, usually professional critics, as to whether the concept should be extended or not. Aestheticians may lay down similarity conditions but never necessary and

⁷¹ Morris Weitz, *The Role of Theory in Aesthetic*, p. 143-144, 1987.

sufficient ones for the correct application of the concept. With "art" its conditions of application can never be exhaustively enumerated since new cases can always be envisaged or created by artists, or even nature, which would call for a decision on someone's part to extend or to close the old or to invent a new concept. (For example, "It's not a sculpture, it's a mobile.")⁷²

Weitz gives to the concept of "art" the value of an "open game," as it was stated by Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations*, and defines the concept of art by a criterion of evaluation and of recognition with the intention of giving some recommendations for criteria of excellence. Wittgenstein raises as an illustrative question "what is a game?" The traditional philosophical and theoretical answer would be in terms of some exhaustive set of properties common to all games.

What Weitz points out in Wittgenstein's *Investigations* is that there are no necessary and sufficient properties common to all games, but only "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and overcrossing such that we can say of games that they form a family with family resemblances and no common traits." For Weitz, the basic resemblance between the open concept of "game" and "art" is in their open texture, where conditions of application are amendable and corrigible. What is not so important is the formula-definition but what lies behind it. "Art," Weitz claims, as the logic of the concept shows, for its open nature, has no set of necessary and sufficient properties.

Aesthetics theory is a logically vain attempt to define what cannot be defined, to state the necessary and sufficient properties of that which has no necessary and sufficient properties, to conceive the concept of art as closed when its very use reveals and demands its openness.⁷³

The criteria of recognition for works of art is made by "strands of similarity, conditions and bundles of properties". None of the criteria of recognition, for Weitz, is a defining one, either necessary or sufficient. As Weitz argues the definitions of the necessary and sufficient properties of art are honorific definitions pure and simple, in which "art" has been redefined in terms of chosen criteria. "If we take the aesthetic theories literally, as we have seen, they all fail" Weitz claims by pointing out their

⁷² Ibid., p. 149.

⁷³ Ibid., p.147.

role in our understanding of art and in teaching us what to look for and how to look at it in art.

To understand the role of aesthetic theory is not to conceive it as definition, logically doomed to failure, but to read it as summaries of seriously made recommendations to attend in certain ways to certain features of art.⁷⁴

Weitz argues that the role of theory in aesthetics is to summarise "recommendations" to attend in certain ways to certain features of "art." Where there is a convergence between "art" and "philosophy," which in turn converges with "science."

Terry Eagleton claims that aesthetics is concerned with a range of wider social, political and ethical questions which are central current issues in the contemporary dominant Western thought and in particular on European culture. Eagleton further argues that since its mid-eighteenth original formulation, aesthetics has played the role to reinforce the distinction "between the material and the immaterial: between things and thoughts, sensations and ideas."

The aesthetic concerns this most gross and palpable dimension of the human, which post-Cartesian philosophy, in some curious lapse of attention, has somehow managed to overlook. It is thus the first stirring of a primitive materialism - of the body's long inarticulate rebellion against the tyranny of the theoretical.⁷⁵

John Dewey in *Art As Experience* argues against the separation between body and mind, made by the dualistic distinction between material and immaterial, which by treating mind as an independent entity from its body and environment, takes art out of the province of the live creature.

Mind that bears only an accidental relation to the environment occupies a similar relation to the body. In making mind purely immaterial (isolated from the organ of doing and undergoing), the body ceases to be living and becomes a dead lump. This conception of mind as an isolated being underlies the conception that aesthetic experience is merely something "in mind," and strengthens the conception which isolates the aesthetic from those modes of experience in which the body is actively engaged with the things of nature and life.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Ibid., 153.

⁷⁵ Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetics*, p. 13, 1990.

⁷⁶ John Dewey, *Art As Experience*, p. 264, 1980.

Dewey further points out against the isolation of art and its appreciation, caused by theories, raised from “specifiable extraneous conditions,” which disconnect art from other modes of ordinary experience of life. These extraneous theories, he argues, are also responsible for intellectualizing the dualistic distinction between sensuous and “borrowed” mediated quality, which, aesthetically, cannot be immediately experienced.

While some theorists make a distinction between sensuous and borrowed value because of the metaphysical dualism just mentioned, others make it from fear lest the work of art be unduly intellectualized. They are concerned to emphasize something which is in fact an aesthetic necessity: the immediacy of aesthetic experience. It cannot be asserted too strongly that what is not immediate is not aesthetic. The mistake lies in supposing that only certain *special* things—those attached just to eye, ear, etc. - can be qualitatively and immediately experienced.⁷⁷

Dewey, by pointing out the imaginative value of the aesthetic experience as a conscious perception extended by meanings and values only imaginatively present, further states:

Aesthetic experience is imaginative. This fact, in connection with a false idea of the nature of imagination, has obscured the larger fact that all *conscious* experience has of necessity some degree of imaginative quality. For while the roots of every experience are found in the interaction of a live creature with its environment, that experience becomes conscious, a matter of perception, only when meanings enter it that are derived from prior experiences. Imagination is the only gateway through which these meanings can find their way into a present interaction; or rather, as we have just seen, the conscious adjustment of the new and the old *is* imagination.⁷⁸

Aesthetics, as a philosophical mode of inquiry applied to the experience of art, is pointed out by Eugene Kaelin.

The job of philosophy, then, is to refine meanings, not by empty logic-chopping, but by continual referral of ideas to the conditions of everyday experience. And when the critical reflective method of philosophy is applied to the area of our experiences of art it is called “aesthetics.”⁷⁹

Kaelin defines *aesthetics* as a “philosophical interpretation of the significance of human experience,” in which consciousness and objects are correlates.

Benedetto Croce claims in *The Essence of Aesthetics* that the nature of *art* that have arisen down in the course of history, at a determined moment, yet it is limited by the

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.119.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 272.

⁷⁹ Eugene Kaelin, *An Existentialist Aesthetic*, p. 322, 1966.

history of that moment, and cannot pretend to have a value of totality, or what is called a definitive solution. He defends the a-logical character of art against any utilitarianism. Croce presents art as a form of intuition and he denies that theories that attempt to explain “art” as “philosophy” as well as “religion” or “science” have the rights to occupy the greater part of the history of aesthetics. In *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic*, he claims that to conceive aesthetics as “a science of art” separates “art” from its general spiritual life, is making “art as a sort of special function or aristocratic club,” which does not allow to reveal the true nature of art and its roots in human nature. Croce affirms the indivisibility of the work of art as a whole, and arguing against the customary traditional approach of aesthetic inquiry to divide a work of art in parts for the sake of the theoretical inquiry.

The fact that we divide a work of art into parts, a poem into scenes, episodes, similes, sentences, or a picture into scenes, episodes, similes, sentences, or a picture into single figures and objects, background, foreground, etc., may seem opposed to this affirmation. But such division annihilates the work, as dividing the organism into heart, brain, nerves, and muscles and so on, turns the living being into a corpse.⁸⁰

Croce argues against the tradition to present science as well art as part of a single linear human development which pretends to show the whole history of knowledge as one single line of progress and regress. He conceives art as intuition, and intuition, for Croce, is individuality which does not repeat itself. For this reason it should be erroneous to represent the history of art as developed following a single line.

Consequently, any attempt at an aesthetic classification of the arts is absurd. If they be without limits, they are not exactly determinable, and consequently cannot be philosophically classified. All the books dealing with classifications and systems of the arts could be burned without any loss whatever.⁸¹

Hans-Georg Gadamer argues that the word “art” is a Western cultural context-bound word.

The problem that we have posed is that of bridging the enormous gap between the traditional form and content of Western art and the ideals of contemporary artists. The word *art* itself gives us a first orientation. We should never underestimate what a word can tell us, for language represents

⁸⁰ Benedetto Croce, *Aesthetic*, p. 47, 1922.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

the previous accomplishment of thought. Thus we should take the word *art* as our point of departure. Anyone with the slightest historical knowledge is aware that this word has had the exclusive and characteristic meaning that we ascribe to it today for less than two hundred years.⁸²

For Gadamer, each theory of art and each interpretation of an art work take place within its own historical world related to a particular time and space. Each interpreter has his/her own angle of interpretative participation depending upon his/her personality, education, and culture.

That is, without any doubt, the excellence of the humanities, that we share a common world of tradition and interpreted human experience. The interpretation of the common world in which we participate is certainly not in the first place the objectifying task of methodical thinking. That may certainly be included, but it is not the *raison d'être* of our activity. When we are interpreting a text, it is not to prove "scientifically" that *this* love poem belongs to the genre of love poems. That is an objective statement and nobody can doubt it, but if that conclusion is the only result of investigating a poem, then we have failed. The intention is to understand *this* love poem, on its own and in its unique relation to the common structure of love poems. It is an absolutely individualized particular form, so that one participates in the utterance or message which is there embodied by the poet.⁸³

The history of interpretation is a history of application and it is rather a function of spiritual conservation and tradition, and carries into every present its hidden history. The changing substance of a text is determined by the widespread cultural effects and manifestations it has passed through, and that this wider significance is commonly understood and accepted within any present culture.

To the extent that hermeneutics brings the contribution of the sciences into this context of mutual agreement that links us with the tradition that has come down to us in a unity that is efficacious in our lives, it is not just a repertory of methods....⁸⁴

The historical perspective, in the procedure of understanding, accounts prior the perspective and idiom of the interpreter. For Gadamer, interpretation does not require the neutralization of one's personal historical horizon, because no method can transcend the own historicity of the interpreter.

In its original meaning, interpretation implies pointing in a particular direction. It is important to note that all interpretation points in a direction rather than to some final endpoint, in the sense that it points toward an open realm that can be filled in a variety of ways. We can distinguish two different senses of

⁸² Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, p. 12, 1986.

⁸³ Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Hermeneutics of Suspicion", p. 64, 1984.

⁸⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science*, p. 137, 1992.

interpretation: pointing to something and pointing out the meaning of something. Clearly both of these are connected with one another. "Pointing to something" is a kind of "indicating" that functions as a sign. "Pointing out what something means," on the other hand, always relates back to the kind of sign that interprets itself. Thus when we interpret the meaning of something, we actually interpret an interpretation.⁸⁵

Gadamer further clarifies this idea of interrelation between interpreter and what is to be interpreted. He argues that between the two there is a "sustaining agreement" which links one to the other.

Social life consists of a constant process of transformation of what previously has been held valid. But it would surely be an illusion to want to deduce normative notions *in abstract* to and to posit them as valid with the claim of scientific rectitude. The point here is a notion of science that does not allow for the ideal of the non participating observer but endeavors instead to bring to our reflective awareness the communality that binds everyone together. In my own works I have applied this point to the hermeneutic sciences and stressed the way the being of the interpreter pertains intrinsically to the being of what is to be interpreted. Whoever wants to understand something already brings along something that anticipatorily joins him with what he wants to understand - a sustaining agreement.⁸⁶

In the hermeneutical circle, we cannot understand a part as such until we have a perception of the whole, because a genuine dialectic always occurs between our idea of the whole and our perception of the components that make it. Once the dialectic has begun, neither side is totally determined by the other. Claiming that because "interpretation is always on the way and the very idea of a definitive interpretation seems to be intrinsically contradictory," Gadamer argues against the claim of the legitimacy of a definitive scientific "objective" knowledge.

If one wishes to appraise the significance or the task and the limits of what we call hermeneutics today, one must bear in mind this philosophical and humane background, this fundamental doubt about the legitimacy of objective self-consciousness. In a certain way, the very word *hermeneutics* and its cognate word *interpretation* furnish a hint, for these words imply a sharp distinction between the claim of being able to explain a fact completely through deriving all its conditions; through calculating it from the givennes of all its conditions; and through calculating it from the givennes of all its conditions; and through learning to produce it by artificial arrangement - the well-known ideal of natural scientific knowledge; and on the other hand, the claim (say, of interpretation), which we always presume to be no more than an approximation: only an attempt, plausible and fruitful, but clearly never definitive.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful, and Other Essays*, p. 68, 1986.

⁸⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science*, p. 135-136, 1992.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

Gadamer underlines the shifting of legitimacy in science of the criterion of measurability applied in the old objective scientific paradigms.

Perhaps even more significantly, the notion of objectivity so closely coupled in physics with that of measurability has undergone profound changes within more recently theoretical physics.⁸⁸

Gadamer attacks the neutrality of scientific procedures and in particular he denies the “neutrality” of hermeneutics.

Now interpretation refers not only to the explication of the actual intention of a difficult text. Interpretation becomes an expression for getting behind the surface phenomena and data. The so-called critique of ideology called scientific neutrality into doubt. It questioned not merely the validity of the phenomena of consciousness and of self-consciousness (Which was the case with psychoanalysis) but also the purely theoretical validity of scientific objectivity to which the sciences laid claim.⁸⁹

Gadamer further argues:

Once we presuppose that there is no such thing as a fully transparent text or a completely exhaustive interest in the explaining and construing of texts, then all perspectives relative to the art and theory of interpretation are shifted. Then it becomes more important to trace the interests guiding us with respect to a given subject matter than simply to interpret the evident content of a statement. One of the more fertile insights of modern hermeneutics is that every statement has to be seen as a response to a question and that the only way to understand a statement is to get hold of the question to which the statement is an answer. This prior question has its own direction of meanings and is by no means to be gotten hold of through a network of background motivations but rather in reaching out to the broader contexts of meaning encompassed by the question and deposited in the statement.⁹⁰

The interpretation of a work of art, as not just as an object standing, passively, front us, was by Martin Heidegger examined in “The Origin of the Work of Art.”

The world is never an object that stands before us and can be seen. World is the ever-non-objective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse keep us transported into Being.

Heidegger points out that it is art that makes artist and work possible. The work is the origin of the artist, and the artist is defined by his work which is the source of the artist.

The artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither is without the other. Nevertheless, neither is the sole support of the other. In themselves and in their interrelations artist and work are each of

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 14.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 100.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 105-106.

them by virtue of a third thing which is prior to both, namely, that which also gives artist and work of art their names, art.⁹¹

The question of the origin of the artwork is presented by Heidegger as a question concerned the essence of art and the conception of truth in art is evaluated not on the basis of its correspondence to whatever is being represented, but it is envisioned to something that rises from the work of art. The truth of a work of art is that it discloses the being of the work and it is part of the nature of art to disclose the ontological world in which it was created. For Heidegger, the work as work sets up a world, and the work opens the open region of the world. The horizon or context of the world places “the setting-into-work of truth” in which the work of art functions. The appreciation experience of a work of art lets happen the truth openness in the work of art. The appreciators as preservers of the work of art are essentials as well as the creators, and art originates creator and preserver. Heidegger claims that “the world worlds,” it means that the world is not static and the same dynamic character is true of the work of art. The existing world however, at the moment of interpretation, is important as the work of art and must be interpreted within the existing context. With his “art lets truth originate,” Heidegger claims that “to originate” is what the word origin means, and because the question of the origin of the work of art is the origin of the historical existence of the creator and of the preserver, Heidegger, with a circular move, opens this question to the origin of the human historical existence and to the question of what is time as a way of “being-in-the-world” by being temporal with respect to its Being.

Being futural as we have characterized it is, as the authentic 'how' of being temporal, that way of Being of Dasein in which and out of which it gives itself its time. Maintaining myself alongside my past in running ahead I have time....⁹²

In *Being and Time*, with “To the things themselves” he expresses his conception of phenomenology as a mode of grasping objects “in such a way,” in which they *show themselves from themselves*.

⁹¹ Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art”, p. 143, 1993.

⁹² Martin Heidegger, *The Concept of Time* p. 14E, 1992.

'Phenomenology' neither designates the object of its researches, nor characterizes the subject-matter thus comprised. The word merely informs us of the "how" with which *what is* to be treated in this science gets exhibited and handled. To have a science 'of' phenomena means to grasp its objects *in such a way* that everything about them which is up for discussion must be treated by exhibiting it directly and demonstrating it directly.⁹³

To grasp "in such a way" an event which is taking place in its own time span and which is already becoming a future event, it brings time and space together. In these circumstances we are forced to re-think what time is. Heidegger in *The Concept of Time* points out that "Time too is nothing. It persists merely as a consequence of the events taking place in it."⁹⁴ Heidegger further argues that time is that "now" within which events take place.

What is the now? Is the now at my disposal? Am I the now? Is every other person the now? Then time would indeed be I myself, and every other person would be time. And in our being with one another we would be time - everyone and no one.⁹⁵

Heidegger's temporal analysis of human existence has shown that understanding is not just one of the various possible behaviours of the subject, but the mode of the Being of being-there, within its finiteness and historicity, and Hermeneutics hence denotes the whole of its experience of the world in which the work of art constantly renews the mode of being experienced.

In *Reflections on the Problem of Relevance*, Alfred Schutz claims that such a dialectic process of understanding, as "a specific attention à la vie," is sedimented in previously experiences, interconnected into an "experiential framework" or context and from which depends the horizon of the understanding.

It seems a precondition of any thematization that the experience constituting this theme has its own history of which it is the sedimentation. Any one of these experiences inherently refers to previous experiences from which it is derived and to which it refers. I am, thus, at any time in a position to question any of these as to its genesis or historical origin. In other words, each theme refers to elements which formerly have been within the field of our consciousness....⁹⁶

⁹³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 59, 1962.

⁹⁴ Martin Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, p. 3E, 1992.

⁹⁵ Ibid.,. p.5E.

⁹⁶ Alfred Schutz, *Reflections on the Problem of Relevance*, p. 14, 1970.

Understanding, for Schutz depends from the “actual interest” of the subject, as a form of relevance, which in turn depends from the situation in which the problem is raised and from the system of problems to which that specific problem belongs.

It is the set of "actual interests," which itself depends upon the autobiographical and situational circumstances of the individual that limit what is commonly called the level of investigation (that is, the borderline up to which a segment of the world has to be put into question)...⁹⁷

Each of us, for Schutz, has a “stock of knowledge at hand” which characterizes the multiple layers of meaning of our own social world, “our own system of reference.”

The interpretatively relevant moment of both - the experience to be interpreted and the scheme of interpretation (i.e. the applicable previous experiences as found in our stock of knowledge at hand) - are integrated into systems, and systems, at least as to their type, as well as the typical ways in which they are applied, are within the stock of what we have already experienced. Such already acquired history has its genetic and autobiographically determined history and is itself the sediment of habitually acquired practice.⁹⁸

Schutz claims that our knowledge is derived and distributed socially and a small part of it and of our stock of knowledge at hand has originated from our own personal experience, but the greater part of it is socially communicated to us. He argues that there is not such a thing as an isolated experience without a context, a social world, a system of reference:

Any experience is experience within a context. Any present experience receives its meaning from the sum total of past experiences which led to the present one and is also connected by more or less empty anticipations to future experiences, the occurrence of which may or may not fulfil these expectations.⁹⁹

Schutz in *The Phenomenology of the Social World* argues that the problem of the interpretative relevances in the process of understanding cannot be taken as isolated but is interrelated with others, forming a complex system, within systems of problems. He further claims that between the interpreter and his reflective vision there is a social world which plays with decisions concerning which alternatives follow as relevant in the interpretative act.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 35.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 43.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 88.

Postmodern pluralistic interpretations of “art” and “text” and “ethnoreality” have undermined the Western modern belief that there is a singular truth as well as a singular ground for art, moving contemporary artists to redefine their role and the significance of art, as it was pointed out, as follows, in the brochure of the symposium on *The Dematerialization of Art*, organized by the International Center for Advanced Studies in Art at New York University, in 1987.

Postmodern thought points to a total redefinition of the role of the artist and the significance of art. Scientific breakthroughs have presented not just a new version of reality but also of time and space. The body, mind and senses are no longer the only means by which we experience the world. What significance this will have for art cannot yet be said but we are clearly on the brink of the most extraordinary leap in human perception.

Jean-Francois Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* claims in act in the contemporary culture and society a process of *delegitimation* of the Western knowledge, which he argues has lost its objective and scientific credibility. This crisis for Lyotard has caused an erosion of the separation among scientific disciplines and, through the lost of the control by the dominant power of the territory of the knowledge, new realms and scientific breakthroughs are originate.

The classical dividing lines between the various fields of science are thus called into question - disciplines disappear, overlappings occur at the border between sciences, and from these new territories are born. The speculative hierarchy of learning gives way to an immanent and, as it were, “flat” network of areas of inquiry, the respective frontiers of which are in constant flux. The old “faculties” splinter into institutes and foundations of all kinds, and the universities lose their function of speculative legitimation.¹⁰⁰

Lyotard further argues that this delegitimation has opened the road to the emergence of new frontiers and of new languages, leading to the current postmodern theory attacking to the legitimacy of the Western dominant thought. He argues that postmodernism has opened new territory to art and to the artists by questioning modern art theory.

The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, put forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable. A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of

¹⁰⁰ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, p. 39, 1979.

a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been done*.¹⁰¹

Postmodern thought and deconstruction theory have challenged Modernist tradition. *Deconstruction* in art allows a new pluralism in aesthetics and expands the artist's cultural domain.

But by relating it to something to which it has no relation, is one not immediately permitting oneself to be encoded by philosophical logos, to stand under its banner? certainly, except by writing this relationship following the mode of a nonrelationship about which it would be demonstrated simultaneously or obliquely-on the philosophical surface of the discourse-that no philosopheme will ever have been prepared to conform to it or translate it.¹⁰²

Derrida argues that there is a "reappropriation" shift in the theory of interpretation which attacks the existing limits and distinctions by bringing inside what was outside and viceversa.

How to interpret - but here interpretation can no longer be a theory or discursive practice of philosophy - the strange and unique property of a discourse that organizes the *economy* of its representation, the law of its proper weave, such that its *outside* is never its outside, never surprises it, such that the logic of its heteronomy still reasons from within the vault of its autism? For this is how *Being* is understood: it's proper. It assures without let-up the *relevant movement* of reappropriation. Can one then *pass this* singular limit which is not a limit, which no more separates the inside from the outside than it assures their permeable and transparent continuity?¹⁰³

Derrida further continues arguing and questioning the resistance of the philosophical discourse to deconstruction, in reference of two kinds of appropriating mastery, hierarchy and envelopment.

It is the infinite mastery that the agency of Being (and of the) proper seems to assure it; this mastery permits it to interiorize every limit as *being* and as being its own *proper*. To exceed it, by the same token, and therefore to preserve it in itself. Now, in its mastery and its discourse on mastery (for mastery is a signification that we still owe to it), philosophical power always seems to combine *two types*. On the one hand, a *hierarchy*: the particular sciences and regional ontologies are subordinated to general ontology, and then to fundamental ontology. From this point of view all the questions that solicit Being and the proper upset the order that submits the determined field of science, its formal objects or materials (logic and mathematics, or semantics,

101 Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, p. 81, 1979.

102 Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, p. xiv, 1982.

103 *Ibid.*, p. xvi.

linguistic, rhetoric, science of literature, political economy, psychoanalysis, etc.), to philosophical jurisdiction. In principle, then, these questions are prior to the constitution of a rigorous, systematic, and orderly theoretical discourse in these domains (which therefore are no longer simply domains, regions circumscribed, delimited, and assigned from outside and above). On the other hand, an *envelopment*: the whole is implied, in the speculative mode of reflection and expression, in each part. Homogenous, concentric, and circulating indefinitely, the movement of the whole is remarked in the partial determinations of the system or encyclopedia, without the status of that remark, and the partitioning of the part, giving rise to any general deformation of the space.¹⁰⁴

Derrida's challenge the *logocentric* tendency of Western thought to refer "all questions of the meaning of representations" to a singular founding source which allows, within an hierarchical view, to identify a presence of an "author" behind them, as well as to imagine an artist fully in possess of his own art, it was argued by Victor Burgin in *The End of Art Theory. Criticism and Postmodernity*.

When we consider what Derrida calls "logocentrism - the belief that all questions of meaning are to be referred to a privileged origin - together "humanism" - the view of man as in full and spontaneous possession of himself and of his own espression - we can see one of the reasons why painting continues to be so very highly valued, not only in conservative aesthetics....¹⁰⁵

Artworld and Contemporary Changes

The individual identity of the artist and the commodity identity of the work of art are critical concepts in the contemporary art world debate. In order to debate art theories, art critics and philosophers of art usually refer to an "artworld," a kind of social world made by the history of art and by art theories. For Arthur Danto, the "artworld" means an "atmosphere of artistic theory."

To see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry--an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld¹⁰⁶

Danto further claims that what makes "art" is its artistic identification within an artworld, within a certain theory of art, which, belonging to the history of art, in turn creates an artworld. Using as an example the case of the Andy Warhol's Brillo Boxes,

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. xix-xx

¹⁰⁵ Victor Burgin, *The End of Art Theory. Criticism and Postmodernity*, p. 33, 1986.

¹⁰⁶ Arthur Danto, "The Artworld", p. 162, 1987

Danto argues that, because they were made by a person with an “is” of artistic identification belonging to the artworld, it was this identity that made them “art.” He further argues that “...and the Brillo box of the artworld may be just the Brillo box of the real one, separated and united by the “is” of artistic identification.”¹⁰⁷ Danto points out the discrimination between a Warhol's Brillo box and a Brillo box in the stockroom of a supermarket consists in a certain theory of art that brings the first up in the artworld, and “keeps it from collapsing into the real object.”

What in the end makes the difference between a Brillo box and a work of art consisting of a Brillo Box is a certain theory of art. It is the theory that takes it up into the world of art, and keeps it from collapsing into the real object which it is (in a sense of is other than that of artistic identification). Of course, without the theory, one is unlikely to see it as art, and in order to see it as part of the artworld, one must have mastered a good deal of artistic theory as well as a considerable amount of the history of recent New York painting. It could not have been art fifty years ago....It is the role of artistic theories, these days as always, to make the artworld, and art, possible. It would, I should think, never have occurred to the painters of Lascaux that they were producing *art* on those walls. Not unless there were Neolithic aestheticians.”¹⁰⁸

Because “art” is possible “through an atmosphere compounded of artistic theories and of the history of recent and remote painting,” it derives that “art” belongs to the “artworld.” For Danto is the “is” of artistic identification belonging to the artworld, that after it is mastered by the artist transforms a simple work in a work of art. The identification of this special “is” of artistic identification is by Danto pointed out as follows:

There is an *is* that figures prominently in statements concerning artworks which is not the *is* of either identity or predication; nor is it the *is* of existence, of identification, or some special *is* made up to serve a philosophic end. Nevertheless, it is in common usage, and is readily mastered by children. It is the sense of *is* in accordance with which a child, shown a circle and a triangle and asked which is him and which his sister, will point to the triangle saying “That is me”; or, in response to my question, the person next to me points to the man in purple and says “That one is Lear”; or in the gallery I point, for my companion's benefit, to a spot in the painting before us and say “That white dab is Icarus.” We do not mean, in these instances, that whatever is pointed to stands for, or represents, what it is said to be, for the *word* ‘Icarus’ stands for or represents Icarus: yet I would not in the same sense of *is* point to the word and say “That is Icarus.” The sentence “That *a* is *b*” is perfectly compatible with “That *a* is not *b*” when the first employs this sense of *is* and the second employs some other, though *a* and *b* are used nonambiguously throughout. Often, indeed, the truth of the first *requires* the truth of the second. The first,

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 164

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 164.

in fact, is incompatible with "That *a* is not *b*" only when the *is* is used nonambiguously throughout. For want of a word I shall designate this the *is of artistic identification*; in each case in which it is used, the *a* stands for some specific physical property of, or physical part of, an object; and finally, it is a necessary condition for something to be an artwork that some part or property of it be designable by the subject of a sentence that employs this special "*is*".¹⁰⁹

Danto claims that in the 20th century the question of "what is art?" became urgent because the existing art models collapsed and it became more visible the inadequacy of the art theories.

Now if we look at the art of our recent past in these terms, grandiose as they are, what we see is something which depends more and more upon theory for its existence as art, so that theory is not something external to a world it seeks to understand: hence in understanding its object it has to understand itself.¹¹⁰

George Dickie defines "art" for its institutional nature and he uses the term "artworld" to refer to the broad social framework in which have place works of art.

The artworld consists of a bundle of systems: theatre, painting, sculpture, literature, music and so on; each of which furnishes an institutional background for the conferring of the status on objects within its domain. There is no limit to the number of systems which can be brought under the generic conception of art and each of the major systems contains further sub-systems. These features of the artworld provide the elasticity whereby creativity of even the most radical sort can be accommodated.¹¹¹

For Dickie, the artworld is made by an infinity of systems and subsystems, which operates as institutional framework for presenting works and "conferring" upon them the status of candidates for appreciation as "works of art." Within the setting the artworld is giving this status of candidate for appreciation. But who has the status to be a candidate for appreciation?

A work of art in the classificatory sense is (1) an artifact (2) upon which some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld) has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation.¹¹²

Dickie admits that the notion of conferring status within the framework of the artworld is "excessively vague."

Certainly this notion is not as clear-cut as is the conferring of status within the legal system...The counterparts in the artworld to specified procedures and

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 159.

¹¹⁰ Arthur Danto, "The End of Art", p. 31, 1984.

¹¹¹ George Dickie, "Defining Art: II", p. 124, 1973.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 125.

lines of authority are nowhere codified, and the artworld carries on its business at the level of customary practice. Still there *is* a practice and this defines a social institution, a social institution need not have a formally established constitution,...in order to exist and have the capacity to confer status...Assuming that the existence of the artworld has been established or at least been made plausible, the problem is now to see how status is conferred by this institution. My thesis is that analogous to the way in which a person is certified as qualified for office, or a person acquires that status of wise man within a community, an artifact can acquire the status of candidate for appreciation within the social system which may be called "the artworld."¹¹³

But how it is possible to recognize that this status has been conferred to some candidates? for Dickie it is shown by their appearances in galleries, theatres, museums, etc., recognized institutional places of the artworld. It is a social property of the artworld and the artworld confers this status. Dickie, arguing about the treating of an artifact as a candidate for appreciation, raises the case of an action made by a salesman of plumbing supplies compared with Duchamp's entering in an art show with a urinal, labelled *Fountain*, and with the Walter de Maria's naming as "art" a stainless-steel bar. He argues that what makes a thing a work of "art" is the important difference between "placing before" and "conferring the status of candidate for appreciation" which makes possible that Duchamp's *Fountain* is not just a misplaced urinal because of its artistic identification, in this case, conferred by the artist Duchamp.

The difference is that Duchamp's action took place within the institutional setting of the artworld and the plumbing salesman's action took place outside of it. The salesman could do what Duchamp did, that is, convert a urinal into a work of art, but such a thing probably would not occur to him...Walter de Maria has in the case of one of his works even gone through the emotions-no doubt as a burlesque-of using a procedure which is used by many legal and some nonlegal institutions-the procedures of licensing. His High Energy Bar (a stainless-steel bar) is accompanied by a certificate which bears the name of the work and states that the bar is a work of art only when the certificate is present.¹¹⁴

The institutional context of "art" within the artworld setting and the philosophical theories of aesthetics have never been of more crucial importance in the understanding and making "art" in the twentieth century.

Theodor Adorno attacks the institutional role of the "critics" within the setting of art in the market of intellectual products of the ruling mind of the bourgeois society.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 126.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 126.

When the critics in their playground – art - no longer understand what they judge and enthusiastically permit themselves to be degraded to propagandists or censors, it is the old dishonesty of trade fulfilling itself in their fate. The prerogatives of information and position permit them to express their opinion as if it were objectivity. But it is solely the objectivity of the ruling mind.¹¹⁵

The crises of art in the beginning of the XX century was pointed out by Walter Benjamin as a consequence of the negative rising of “art for the sake of art” and the decreasing of the work of art in social significance.

The secular cult of beauty, developed during the Renaissance and prevailing for three centuries, clearly showed that ritualistic basis in its decline and the first deep crisis which befell it. With the advent of the first truly revolutionary means of reproduction, photography, simultaneously with the rise of socialism, art sensed the approaching crisis which has become evident a century later. At the time, art reacted with the doctrine of *l'art pour l'art*, that is, with a theology of art. This gave rise to what might be called a negative theology in the form of the idea of "pure" art, which not only denied any social function of art but also any categorizing by subject matter.¹¹⁶

The concern of cultural and artistic renewal was historically felt by the avant-garde as attack to the bourgeois institution of art and against aestheticism and its concept of autonomous art, challenging the separation of art from its context and bridging artists and public together as integral components of the work of art.

Lambert Zuidervaart argues that avant-garde movements rejected both bourgeois life praxis and aestheticism. The avant-garde tried both “to organize a new life praxis from a basis in art” and to eliminate autonomous art as an institution. Zuidervaart, claiming that the self-referentiality of autonomous art might make truth possible in some works and prevent this disclosure in others, argues further against the support of Adorno for autonomous art and its self-referential import.

In Adorno's account, autonomy and social character mark the position of the work of art within advanced capitalist societies...The autonomy of art works is conditioned by society as a whole, but their autonomy is itself a precondition for truth in art. The notions of autonomy and truth, in turn, provide the impetus for Adorno's claims about social significance. Although Adorno locates the social significance of the art work in both its import and its social functions, he understands these social functions as primarily cognitive functions, and he regards their significance as directly dependent on the import of the work. Although import consists of both social content and truth

115 Theodor W. Adorno, *Prism*, p. 20, 1981.

116 Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Technical Reproducibility”, p. 224, 1969.

content, truth provides the ultimate criterion for the social significance of the work's import....¹¹⁷

Zuidervaart point out that the final import of the work of autonomous art was "distance from life praxis," a complete detachment of art from life. Against this detachment, he supports the truth and social significance of "heteronomous art."

By "heteronomous art" I mean art that has not become relatively independent from other institutions of bourgeois society and whose products are produced and received to accomplish purposes that are directly served by other institutions. The term covers both traditional folk art and contemporary popular art.¹¹⁸

Heteronomous art has a non referential significance, with its purposes as "functions within other institutions," in fluid contrast with autonomous art, and is able to challenge the existing order. Zuidervaart argues that the avant-garde, by attacking the institution of autonomous art to eliminate it, and rejecting both bourgeois life praxis and aestheticism, in order to disclose human aspirations, helped to understand the need of a more open scenery where to disclose their "art."

"Avant-gardiste manifestations" undermined the notion of art's intended purpose, negated the categories of individual creation and individual reception, and challenged the distinction between producer and recipient.¹¹⁹

To make possible such an attack to the normativity of autonomous art, he introduces a "complex normativity" on which a heteronomous art could operate.

"Complex normativity" means a network of norms, no one of which has preeminence, and some of which apply to phenomena outside the institution of autonomous art. Some of the norms could apply to the functions of works within an institution of art. Other could apply to the functions of works within other institutions.¹²⁰

The individuality of the artist and purity of autonomous art, which characterized the aesthetics of the Modernism, instead of being really free or pure from any particular other interest which was not of art, on the contrary, was by Zuidervaart claimed to serve to consolidate the institutional bourgeois control of art through a process of self-referentiality.

¹¹⁷ Lambert Zuidervaart, "The Social Significance of Autonomous Art: Adorno and Burger", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 48, 65-66, 1990.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

The process and structures that have come to characterize autonomous art are such that the products in this institution tend to be self-referential. This self-referential tendency has become increasingly evident in the twentieth century. For products of autonomous art the primary means of serving this institution's purposes are to affirm and criticize other products of autonomous art. The functions of these products in other institutions tend to be secondary means that are subservient to self-referential functions.¹²¹

Clement Greenberg in "Modernist Painting" claims a "purity" of self-definition of art as an independent domain.

It quickly emerged that the unique and proper area of competence of each art coincided with all that was unique to the nature of its medium. The task of self-criticism became to eliminate from the effects of each art any and every effect that might conceivably be borrowed from or by the medium of any other art. Thereby each art would be rendered "pure," and in its "purity" find the guarantee of its standards of quality as well as of its independence. "Purity" meant self-definition....¹²²

In "The Integrity of Aesthetics" David Novitz argues that it is false to keep the idea that aesthetic values are independent and pure of particular economic, religious, gender, production interests and that each of them try to advance certain view of art and undermining others.

Different social structures serve different interests, and it is well known that not all interests are served equally. Much the same is true of that cluster of social relations that is called the art world. It too embodies and reflects (in the form of criteria of value) certain artistic and social interests while subverting or undermining others. This is why it is false to maintain that aesthetic values are pure and totally unmediated by economic, moral, intellectual, religious or gender interests. For all of these reasons, then, any attempt to explain aesthetic judgements as devoid of, and wholly uninfluenced by, the concerns and interests of everyday life is bound to fail.¹²³

During modernism, aesthetics becomes a central component in the constitution of the ruling Western bourgeois ideologies. Terry Eagleton foresees the emergence of a form of Western cultural imprisonment or theoretical slavery of "art" from a not well recognized ideology of aesthetics.

The emergence of the aesthetic as a theoretical category is closely bound up with the material process by which cultural production, at an early stage of bourgeois society, becomes 'autonomous' - autonomous, that is, of the various social functions which it has traditionally served. Once artefacts become commodities in the market place, they exist for nothing and nobody in particular, and can consequently be rationalized, ideologically speaking, as

121 Ibid., p. 67.

122 Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting", p. 102, 1966.

123 David Novitz, "The Integrity of Aesthetics", *The Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism* 48, p. 19, 1990.

existing entirely and gloriously for themselves. It is this notion of autonomy or self-referentiality which the new discourse of aesthetics is centrally concerned to elaborate; ..that art is thereby conveniently sequestered from all other social practices, to become an isolated enclave within which the dominant social order can find an idealized refuge from its own actual values of competitiveness, exploitation and material possessiveness.¹²⁴

Charles J. Lumsden foresees that for sociobiology aesthetics would become in the '90s what ethics were in the '80s, namely a new source of ideas to verify matters usually considered as being part exclusively of philosophical discourse.

Thus, until cognitive science abandons the clockwork-in-the-head tack and begin to rejoin, as it were, deduction with passion, a truly profound understanding of aesthetic judgement (and the fights it causes) simply must wait. The wait may not be too long. Novel ideas about microcognition and parallel distributed processing, about thought as lived metaphor, and about the passions as astute guides to judgment are breaking deductive logic's stranglehold on mind theory. Now there is room for a "calculus of felt distinctions" that makes possible a newly resynthesized science of mind in which feeling, understanding, appreciating, and contemplating are all of one piece - as are we.¹²⁵

Lumsden argues that art is an autonomous realm, independent from any universal and functionalist theory, and against the "tyranny of function."

Evolutionists, including myself, have tried again and again to put the aesthetic experience at the disposal of the fittest, suggesting by turns that it allows us to judge commodious environments in which to camp and hunt; that it is an efficient and effective means of impressing values and ideas upon the uninformed (or unconvinced), that it is a means of using culture to gain the edge in competing for valuable resources....Functional speculations about service to genetic fitness are as a lot charming, and may sound more than a little plausible to an ear accustomed to Darwinian refrains. Yet, as a lot, they are all bottom-heavy, directing our attention to what serves genes, and genome activity, as we search for understanding about art. So they miss entirely the basic evolutionary point of our species; we are as we are, *what we are*, not because we are genetic creatures but *because we are bred of both genomic and cultural activity*: biocultural organisms.¹²⁶

Howard Gardner in *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* claims for "art," within a cognitive perspective, a spatial-time intelligence value, able to increase the perception.

While one might underestimate the component of spatial thinking in the sciences, the centrality of spatial thinking in the visual arts is self-evident. The enterprise of painting and sculpture involve an exquisite sensitivity to the

124 Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p. 9, 1990.

125 Charles J. Lumsden, "Aesthetics", 259, 1991.

126 *Ibid.*, p. 264.

visual and spatial world as well as an ability to recreate it in fashioning a work of art.¹²⁷

Also, a cognitive value for “art” is claimed by Jerome S. Bruner. He argues that “art” is a form of knowing coming from “the creation of a stream of metaphoric activity,” different from the mode of knowing of science.

The elegant rationality of science and the metaphoric non-rationality of art operate with deeply different grammars; perhaps they even represent a profound complementarity. For in the experience of art, we connect by a grammar of metaphor, one that defies the rational methods of the linguist and the psychologist.¹²⁸

He describes this artistic mode of knowing as “the conversion of impulse into the experience of art made by simultaneous presence of several streams of fringe association” in which an active knowing function is played by the beholder in fusing and connecting inner experiences.

John Dewey claims that “art” is able to advance human development.

A conception of fine art that sets out from its connection with discovered qualities of ordinary experience will be able to indicate the factors and forces that favour the normal development of common human activities into matters of artistic value. It will also be able to point out those conditions that arrest its normal growth.¹²⁹

The survival vital need of a living being for Dewey is bound up with interchanges with its environment, which “reach to the roots of the aesthetic in experience.”

If the gap between organism and environment is too wide, the creature dies. If its activity is not enhanced by the temporary alienation, it merely subsists. Life grows when a temporary falling out is a transition to a more extensive balance of the energies of the organism with those of the conditions under which it lives. These biological commonplaces are something more than that; they reach to the roots of the aesthetic in experience.¹³⁰

Dewey further claims a close relationship between the nature of experience and related conditions of life.

The nature of experience is determined by the essential conditions of life. While man is other than bird and beast, he shares basic vital functions with them and has to make the same basal adjustments if he is to continue the process of living. Having the same vital needs, man derives the means by which he breathes, moves, looks and listen, the very brain with which he

¹²⁷ Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, p. 195-196, 1983.

¹²⁸ Jerome S. Bruner, “Art as a Mode of Knowing”, *On Knowing. Essays for the Left Hand*, p. 74, 1971.

¹²⁹ John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, p. 11, 1980.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

coordinates his senses and his movements, from his animal forbears. The organs with which he maintains himself in being are not of himself alone, but by the grace of struggles and achievements of a long line of animal ancestry.¹³¹

For Marcel Duchamp the experience of art is closely associated to the experience of the spectator.

The creative act takes another aspect when the spectator experiences the phenomenon of transmutation; through the change from inert matter into a work of art, an actual transubstantiation has taken place, and the role of the spectator is to determine the weight of the work on the aesthetic scale. All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act.¹³²

In the '60s, the reunification of things and thoughts and the breaking of the distinction of function between thing's makers and thinkers or thought's makers was made up as a contemporary art issue by conceptualist artists as it is pointed out by Ursula Meyer in *Conceptual Art* describing the shifting from the dualist conception of perception and conception in earlier art, which questioned as no longer useful the presence of the middleman figure of the art critic.

The function of the critic and the function of the artist have been traditionally divided; the artist's concern was the production of the work and the critic's was its evaluation and interpretation. During the past several years a group of young artists evolved the idiom of Conceptual Art, which eliminated this division. Conceptual artists take over the role of the critic in terms of framing their own propositions, ideas, and concepts.¹³³

In *Conceptual Art. An American Perspective*, Robert C. Morgan describes crosscurrent experimental forms and intermedia hybrid activities made by conceptualist artists as a reaction against the dominance of the modernist formalism in art.

The attacks made by Conceptualist on Formalist aesthetics had a significant impact in widening the boundaries of contemporary art, as evidenced by the emergence of Pluralism in the 1970s.¹³⁴

Lucy Lippard claims that the task of the contemporary art criticism shifted since the '60s, by taking a closer understanding of the positions of the artists and supplying

131 Ibid., p. 13.

132 Marcel Duchamp, "The Creative Act", p. 25-26, 1966.

133 Ursula Meyer, *Conceptual Art*, p. viii, 1972.

134 Robert C. Morgan, *Conceptual Art. An American Perspective*, p. xiii, 1994.

flexible criteria able to deal with the rapid transformations of art, instead to follow rigid formalist criteria in the description of a new work of art.

In the midst of the flux and transitional confusions that characterize advanced art, a contemporary art critic's major preoccupation must be how to establish criteria flexible enough to encompass rapid and radical change. He must decide how to handle a change of mind (his own as well as the artist's), how to distinguish between innovation and novelty, derivation and originality. The "tradition of the new," by now taken for granted, has drastically altered the roles of both critic and artist, and accordingly, the critic's relationship to the artist has also changed.¹³⁵

Lucy Lippard foresees these rapid changes in contemporary art with aesthetic values not based solely on consistency but on flexibility, as element of the originality of a work of art.

New art forms and art movements started in the '60s to challenge art critics and aestheticians with rapid changes and forcing them to a constant participation more than a distant interpretation of the contemporary process of art in order to understand "the idea in the air" and the related "lattice" of interrelating unlike elements of the new works of art, as Lucy Lippard claims.

Today movements are just that; they have no time to stagnate before they are replaced. Much current art is made in reply to issues raised by previous art. This self-critical aspect need not be strictly evolutionary, but can instead be seen as a continuous lattice of interrelating unlike elements. The connecting grid consists of the ideas and articulations that a new art can force from a constant observer - a substantiation of the "idea in the air," and their relation to the unlike objects - the art. The critical lattice (a four-dimensional one, including the time element) shows not only how the various arts looked when they were first seen, but their interrelationships and possibilities at the time; it can chart the structural growth of these possibilities. A style or so-called movement emerges, crystallizes, splits into several directions over this period. As it does, the critic too finds himself divided.¹³⁶

Lippard points out how during the '60s the lost of interest by a significant number of artists in the work of art as a physical object, as well as a materialized economic commodity symbol, provoked a "dematerialization of art," through conceptual art works which emphasised the non visual creative thinking process of "art as idea" and "art as action," which rejected the physical object as a strategic move to reject the economic materialism of the art market built upon objects, since dealers do not sell

¹³⁵ Lucy Lippard, *Changing. Essays in Art Criticism*, p. 23, 1971.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

art-as-idea. She claims that this “disintegration of art” marked the introduction into visual and performing arts of elements of disorder, change, and chaos, which created an intermedia revolution “*whose prophet is John Cage,*” implying the concept of entropy in art, “in a negation of actively ordering parts in favor of the presentation of a whole.”

When works of art, like words, are signs that convey ideas, they are not things in themselves but symbols or representatives of things. Such a work is a medium rather than an end in itself or “art-as-art.” The medium need not be the message, and some ultra-conceptual art seems to declare that the conventional art media are no longer adequate as media to be messages in themselves.¹³⁷

Lippard argues on the need to not confuse the “nonvisual” with the “nonvisible” where the conceptual focus may be “entirely hidden or unimportant to the success or failure of the work.”

A “nonvisual structure” is nonvisual because it does not inspire the usual response to art; it does not make compositional sense, just as the nonrelational primary painting or structure disregards compositional balance. In this way it may incorporate the irrational as well as the rational, disorder as well as order.¹³⁸

During the twentieth century, a reflexive concern characterized the art avant-garde movements, it was pointed out by Barbara Myerhoff and Jay Ruby that “all ask their audience/viewers to become self-aware about their definitions and expectations about art.”¹³⁹

In *The New Art* by Gregory Battcock, speaking about the alchemies in art of the ‘60s, Allan Kaprow points out how the idea of interpenetration of art and the external world raise up from him and several other artists, in the context of a new kind of art form in the open use of the total environment, a new fluid spatial situation with the direct and spontaneous involvement of the public. A new name was required for this new art form, which later was called “Happening.”

Michael Kirby points out how many distortions has occurred in the dissemination of information about Happenings.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 260.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 273.

¹³⁹ Barbara Myerhoff and Jay Ruby, *A Crack in the Mirror: Reflexive Perspective in Anthropology*, p. 12, 1982.

"There is a prevalent mythology about Happenings. It has been said, for example, that they are theatrical performances in which there is no script and "things just happen." It has been said that there is little or no planning, control, or purpose. It has been said that there are no rehearsals. Titillating to some, the object of easy scorn to others, provocative and mysterious to a few, these myths are widely known and believed. But they are entirely false."¹⁴⁰

Lucy Lippard foresees an unavoidable demand of change for the art world coming from new emerging cross-cultural social issues.

It is only recently that the ways different cultures cross and fail to cross in the United States have come under scrutiny. More or less taken for granted for two hundred years, the concept of the monotone meltdown pot, which assumed that everyone would end up white, is giving way to a salad, or an *ajiacó*-the flavourful mix of a Latin American soup in which the ingredients retain their own forms and flavours. This model is fresher and healthier; the colors are varied; the taste is often unfamiliar. The recipe calls for an undertermined simmering period of social acclimation. Demographics alone demand that a society change as its cultural makeup changes. But the contemporary artworld, a somewhat rebellious satellite of the dominant culture, is better equipped to swallow cross-cultural influences than to savor them. Its presumed inventiveness occurs mainly within given formal and contextual parameters determined by those who control the markets and institutions.¹⁴¹

Lippard further points out how postmodern thought has made broader the contemporary art panorama by forcing cross-cultural exchanges and changing the oppressive continuity of a Western hegemonic civilization.

Postmodern analysis has raised important questions about power, desire, and meaning that are applicable to cross-cultural exchange (although there are times when it seems to analyze everything to shreds, wallowing in textual paranoia.) The most crucial of these insights is the necessity to avoid thinking of other cultures as existing passively in the past, while the present is the property of an active "Western civilization." Both women and artists of color are struggling to be perceived as subject rather than object, independent participants rather than socially constructed pawn.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Michael Kirby, *Happenings*, p. 9, 1966.

¹⁴¹ Lucy Lippard, *Mixed Blessing. New Art in a Multicultural America*, p. 5-6, 1990.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

CHAPTER III

STRATEGIES OF INTERPRETATION

In this Chapter the researcher identifies and organizes the primary sources of this inquiry. He describes the field of research and employed interpretative procedures, from an emic or insider point of view, as well as from an etic or outsider point of reference, in identifying and interpreting ideas, texts, images, underlying themes relating one to the other. The field of inquiry is seen as an essentially non-stop event, developing in time, but nevertheless a process of moving from misunderstandings to a multicultural understanding.

The artist as researcher

The model of “the artist as researcher”¹⁴³ is outlined by David Ecker as an underdetermined conceptual model depending upon its particular cultural context which determines the model’s unique features, while sharing some common features. The researcher from 1986 to 1993 studied the model of “the artist as researcher” by following David Ecker’s seminars and courses on *Living Traditions in Art*, at New York University.

As part of his training, he learned to write narrative accounts of his experience as “an insider” following phenomenological procedures described by David Ecker:

Time One. Duration of consciousness of the intentional object in the phenomenal field as it appears prior to reflection....Time Two. Duration of reflection upon the experience had in Time One for the purpose of clarifying whatever qualities, meanings, and structures were perceived or had....Editing. Meta-critical analysis of phenomenological descriptions which adopts a system of marks for the sake of avoiding extensive re-writing....¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ David W. Ecker, "The Artist as Researcher: The Role of the Artist in Advancing Living Traditions in Art" *First International Symposium on Living Traditions*, 1990.

¹⁴⁴ David W. Ecker, *Qualitative Evaluation in the Arts*, p. 17, 1981.

Edward Bruner claims that an important role in reinforcing this group solidarity is played by the storytelling within the groups themselves. He extends the notion of “ethnography as discourse, as a genre of storytelling.”

Stories makes meaning. They operate at the level of semantics in addition to vocabulary and syntax. Just as a story has a beginning, a middle, and an end, culture change, too, almost by definition, takes the form of a sequence with a past, a present, and a future. Our predicament in ethnographic studies of change is that all we have before us is the present, the contemporary scene, and by one means or another we must situate that present in a time sequence....when we talk of gathering or collecting the data as if it were like ripe fruit waiting to be picked, or when we talk of our special anthropological methodologies for reconstructing the past, as if the present were not equally constructed.¹⁴⁵

David Ecker describes his initial experience of an apprentice knifemaker as a controlling factors process.

By reviewing my shop notes and Woody’s detailed “chalk-talks, and by listening to the tape-recording of our lengthy discussions, I was able to reflect upon my initial experiences as an apprentice knifemaker. What became clear is that my own concentration and purpose were the controlling factors at each stage in the process.¹⁴⁶

Ecker, in describing his apprenticeship, underlines also the important correlation of “subject-and-object” as well as the separation of scientific activities from artistic activities, relevant in understanding the “way of being-in-the-world” of *Plexus Black Box*.

The correlation of subject-and-object underlies all of man’s ways of being-in-the-world. Hence, to acknowledge the *human* nature of aesthetic inquiry and its domain is at once to free research in art from the false objective/subjective dichotomy assumed in Western institutions that separate scientific activities from artistic activities.¹⁴⁷

The distinction between subjective and objective as insider/outsider point of view is argued by Marvin Harris with Kenneth Pike in the *Emics and Etics. The Insider/Outsider Debate*.

Participants can be both subjective and objective, and observers can be both subjective and objective. But the discrimination between emic and etic modes depends strictly on the operations employed by the observer. Participants

¹⁴⁵ Edward M. Bruner, “Ethnography as Narrative”, p. 140-141, 1986.

¹⁴⁶ David W. Ecker, “Toward a Phenomenology of Artistic Processes and the Expansion of Living Traditions in Art”, p. 78, 1990.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 83-84.

other than those trained as observers or carefully coached in etic concepts by observers cannot provide etic descriptions of their social lives.¹⁴⁸

Jacques Barzun and Henry Graff in *The Modern Researcher* argue that the historical verification method of records is governed by probability which is made by subjectivity. They describes an objective judgment as “one made by testing in all ways possible one’s subjective impressions, so as to arrive at a knowledge of objects.” They further argue on the need to clear up the misunderstanding on the common notion of subjectivity.

In loose speech “subjectivity” has come to mean “one person’s opinion,” usually odd or false; whereas “objective” is taken to mean “what everybody agrees on,” or correct opinion....This common belief is quite mistaken. “Subjective” and “objective” properly apply not to persons and opinions but to sensations and judgment. Every person, that is, every living subject, is necessarily subjective in all his sensations. But some of his subjective sensations are of objects, others of himself, or “subject.” Your toothache is said to be subjective because it occurs within you as a feeling subject....Now only the tooth is real-hence the tendency to believe that an object is somehow “more real,” that is, more lasting, more public, than a purely subjective impression. But objects themselves are known only by subjects-persons-so the distinction is not clear-cut, much less a test of reality.¹⁴⁹

The misleading notion of subjectivity in art is pointed out by David Ecker in “Introduction: Instituting Qualitative Evaluation in the Arts.”

“You can’t research art; it’s all subjective! As with any research effort, we must begin by identifying the general problem, which arises out of the widespread belief that subjectivity defines the arts while objectivity defines the sciences. It is the question of the cognitive status of the arts disciplines and whether knowledge-claims can be grounded directly in artistic and aesthetic phenomena as we experience them. Vehement denials of the very possibility are readily found in a survey of the literature. The positivists’ dogma that “whatever exists, exists in some degree, and therefore can be measured,” represents one historical source and provides comfort to those who would equate objectivity with quantification. (A less extreme rejection was printed out on a computer card that was given to me years ago: “if it can’t be measured it’s art, and to hell with it.”¹⁵⁰

The researcher was aware, also for his previous scientific training as biochemist at the University of Rome, of the deep relationship among object, subject and the interference of instrument of observation managed by the subject. The interrelationship between object and subject was by him staged in 1985, in New

¹⁴⁸ Thomas N. Headland, Kenneth L. Pike, Marvin Harris, eds, *Emics and Etics. The Insider/ Outsider Debate*, 1990.

¹⁴⁹ Jacques Barzun and Henry Graff, *The Modern Researcher*, p. 183, 1985.

¹⁵⁰ David W. Ecker, ed., *Qualitative Evaluation in the Arts*, p. 9, 1981.

York, at CUANDO, within the Plexus art opera *Goya Time: New York 1985*, where 23 artists performed 23 different interpretations of the same subject-object: *La Maja*. To underline this object-subject correlation, in 1986 he started to perform a series of phenomenological *Eating Art* performances, reporting his experiences in a series of field research's notebooks, such as the following note from his 1987 performance *Do you think it is possible to eat Andy Warhol if you are eating a Campbell Soup Can?*, held with 13 artists, at the Anichini Gallery, in New York, on February 18, the same night in which Andy Warhol died.

There was half moon when I came back at home after my phenomenological experience. It was 2:10 am.

It was for me very hard to accept that bracketing out of relevance my beliefs and friends of mine beliefs was a possible reality in which I could be in the case. I did and I learned something that I refused to do within my friends and my life: to step out and to watch them-us. Who was them-us? Who was "them?" Who was "me?"

The main discovery made by the researcher from keeping his phenomenological notes was that phenomenology was addressed to gain results from the field of experience rather than to explain the method that was applied to achieve results.

The researcher in his notes used, with phenomenological intention, the hyphen between different words, to underline this correlation between object and subject.

The use of the hyphen between "subject and object" or between "subject and world" is pointed out by Maxine Sheets-Johnstone as a particular mode of phenomenology, in which a hyphen "indicates the primordial moment at which subject and object have not yet become separate."¹⁵¹ ..She underlines the need to search out a special language in describing a phenomenological experience in order to be able to "capture precisely the quality of the thing as it is experienced."

To arrive at essential descriptions one needs to transcend habitual formulations of the object or phenomenon; one must come to grips linguistically with the phenomenon as it gives itself in experience. This means forging a new language that captures precisely the quality-the physiognomy-of the phenomenon in question.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, "Phenomenology as a Way of Illuminating Dance", p. 130, 1966.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 135.

Maxime Sheets-Johnstone describes the phenomenological research as a method concerned with results and not with the methodological system itself.

...our concerns and evaluations would then be with the results of the method, not with the methodological system itself. We are otherwise either talking about the phenomenological method at an abstract level, a level many steps removed from the actual doing of phenomenology, since most probably we have not engaged in phenomenological research or attempted a phenomenological analysis ourselves and have therefore never actually experienced the method....¹⁵³

The researcher started his field research with his phenomenological consciousness of “*being there*” in the Heidegger’s sense¹⁵⁴ as an “insider” in the project under inquiry, by keeping reporting his experience in his phenomenological notebooks.

23s report n. ? + 34, November 6, 1994 AD, 10:25 am
Cagliari, Monteurpino.

Defining the coordinates of references of the journey.

“MI-DENTRO-MI-FUORI” (myself-inside-myself-outside).

This quote from Ciccì Borghi’s art work recalled to me the David Ecker’s paper at *Art and Science Today: The Role of Imagination*: “On this experiment, we discover that neither you nor I, nor artists, scientists, psychologists, logicians--nobody-- is free to imagine, remember, depict, portray, represent, photograph, measure, or simply observe an object that is both blue and not-blue.”

I cannot see myself at the same time as a “lived insider” as well as a “lived outsider” of the project under study. Therefore I’ll be first of all, scholarly, scientifically and artistically, who I am: Plexus 23s, a “lived insider” of the living *Plexus Black Box* project. This was-is a result of my phenomenological deconstruction process in progress of the *Plexus Black Box* image A1.

10:45 am

East-West, NYU ICASA Forum, 1986; *Micro and Macro*, NYU ICASA Forum, 1985. As Franco Meloni wrote “from inside the horizon of a Plexus event,” I experienced my emotions’s oxide-reductions of experiencing art. “Eating Art” is-was a metaphoric concept to describe my phenomenological consciousness of artist as researcher as well as a biologist experiencing “art” as an oxide-reduction reaction. (Like a cold nuclear atomic reaction inside my lived body).

11.00 am.

“Il peso del” (the weight of) Dr. Dernini to carry the Well Being Reconciliation Project: “TOUCH-IT-DETACH-IT” I am learning, anyway, in 8 years of phenomenology to suspend my beliefs to reduce my phenomenological experience. Therefore I’ll describe the “outside” from an “outsider/insider” point view, recalling “the Debate EMIC and ETIC,” and the complexity of the project under study within the context of the Well Being and Reconciliation project, made within my critical difficulties and personal family circumstances.

Rodolfo (my 4 year old son) is protesting that he wants to use this pen that I am using, JUST RIGHT NOW! 11.47 am.

The following one is another example of his phenomenological notes, made on May 14, 1993, at 3:30 pm, in David Ecker’s NYU Office, and signed as Plexus 23s. The

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 140.

¹⁵⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 59, 1962.

report is a short speed-up of the presentation, made as part of a collective presentation on Monday, May 3, 1993, with Perry Walker, Ava Hsueh, and Luis Vergara, from 7:00 to 8:00 pm, in room 405 at the NYU Barney Building, for the last class of Ecker's *Phenomenology in Art* course.

May 14, 1993, 3:30 pm, New York, David Ecker's NYU Office.

In 1986, 23 PLEXUS friends played the role of my "social world" as a mirror through which it was only possible to see my refracted self portrait. I was a refracted vision of the social world. The horizon or context of the world places "the setting-into-work of truth" in which the work of art functions. Each phenomenological reduction or analysis of an art work has its own historical world related to the particular time and space on which the analysis is taking place. "It is true or not" was one of my phenomenological questions when on February 18, 1987, at Patrizia Anichini Gallery, 7 East 20th Street, New York, as a continuation field research of my 1986 NYU course E90.2605, *Phenomenology and the Arts*, I phenomenologically inquired 13 artists about "Do you think it is possible to eat Andy Warhol if you eat a Campbell soup?"

I kept notes of my field research on "Eating Art" in a series of logbooks. These logbooks gave me the frame on which I practised the *epoche'*, the forestructure of my first interpretation, again and again to be phenomenologically reduced as part of my ongoing PLEXUS process of human experience.

As an artist/researcher I started a series of logbooks made by images and texts related to my "in the first person" experience of "eating art."

My interpretation as an active performing act goes beyond form or syntax and ordinary language. In classroom, through the appreciative attitude of all participants we tried to create an aesthetic phenomenological experience by transforming an ordinary class into an artistic environment, and then as an act of consciousness, moving back and forth through it, we performed our *epoche'* in progress. At the entrance of the class, "We declare this is our/your *epoche'* in progress while we-you are here" was written on the black board, on which it was hanged up a T-shirt with written "I think therefore I am fish."

Phenomenological reports and notes from the field allowed the researcher to practice a continuous phenomenological exercise by writing notes on his experience with Plexus and on his experience as student at New York University, working at the same time as graduate assistant, before with the International Center for Advanced Studies in Arts at New York University, and after with the NYU Lower East Side Summer Institute of Living Traditions in Art.

This training allowed him to become more familiar with current issues in art, which turned out to be very useful in understanding the artistic, cultural, and institutional context in which originated *Plexus Black Box* and how was positioned within the "artworld." He kept during the entire field research a sceptically suspicious attitude regarding his possibility of suspending his beliefs, while, again

and again, he restarted his phenomenological reduction by bracketing out again pre-reflective meanings. The phenomenological notes and logbooks took by the researcher from 1986 to the present were used by him to keep an attentive consciousness upon learning to describe not only what was appearing in his experience but also how it appeared.

The researcher was also conscious that, trying consciously to place himself inside and outside the artistic center or centers of *Plexus Black Box* and to describe his ongoing-living-experience as it “was/is lived,” was a hard task to be accomplished, something which at the same time was changing his earlier perceptions and providing him with new outside and inside views.

What I have learned is that placing oneself in an artistic center of another culture inevitably changes not only one’s earlier perceptions of that culture and its arts but also provides a new “outside” view of one’s own culture, art, and art education.¹⁵⁵

Field Research

The researcher participated *in the first person* in Plexus activities since 1982 in the role of one of the founders as well as artist, under the name of Plexus 23s. Therefore as Plexus 23s had his own “stock of knowledge at hand,” as defined by Alfred Schutz,¹⁵⁶ which allowed him to have access to other historical Plexus participants, and to know locations of records and relics of the project. From the beginnings of his study in 1986, he started to collect and organize in chronological order all available documents of Plexus. He photocopied documents in a chronological order, without any classification, and packaged them in 13 booklets, one per year from 1982 to 1993, plus another one with records related to the pre-historical cultural context from which Plexus originated.

Then, following the distinction by Barzun and Graff¹⁵⁷ between records as intentional transmitters of facts and relics as unpremeditated transmitters of facts, the researcher

¹⁵⁵ David Ecker, “The Possibility of a Multicultural Art Education,” p. 18, 1986.

¹⁵⁶ Alfred Schutz, *Reflections on the Problem of Relevance*, p. 66, 1990.

¹⁵⁷ Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff, *The Modern Researcher*, p. 166, 1985.

organized chronologically categories of records and relics as follows: Written records: Press releases; announcements; newsletters; pamphlets and publications; diaries and reports; catalogues; slides, photos, negatives. Oral records: anecdotes and tales; recordings in various forms (videotape, audiotape, etc.). Relics: artifacts; memorabilia, legal and business documents; letters, notes.

The researcher applied systematically the historical method to verify names and dates and attributions to sources and to guide him with a methodological historical criticism during his "archaeological research" on the contemporary *Plexus Black Box* and in writing his narrative historical reconstruction of the facts related to it.

The historical method ascertains the truth by means of common sense. When that sense is systematically applied, it becomes a stronger and sharper instrument than is usually found at work in daily life. It shows a closer attention to detail and a stouter hold on consecutiveness and order. The exercise of these capacities turns into a new power by which new intellectual possessions may be acquired.¹⁵⁸

The complete collection made by the researcher of all Plexus editorial records such as booklets, newsletters, pamphlets, shows presentations, press releases, from 1982 to the present, was submitted to the procedures of verification and then became a primary source with participant's recollections for the identification of the primary sources of the study.

Often in this study, references are made to a "black box." From 1989 to the present in Plexus events, several *Plexus Black Boxes* are used metaphorically or literally, in which case they could hold some or many objects made for various events. Sometimes a *Plexus Black Box* did not hold any items, but simply symbolized the items which after years of activities became too numerous to be contained and carried or transported to the various places where Plexus events were held. *Plexus Black Box* appeared in many places. In time it became a symbol which contained the memory of past events or the history of past events of Plexus. During his field research, the artist as researcher proceeded as follows:

Step 1: on April 9 1994, at the Alfa Diallo's House of Originals, in the Lower East Side of New York, with a group of Plexus participants from the *Plexus Black Box*

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 168.

closing event, held on November 12 1993 at the NYU Rosenberg Gallery, he opened the two boxes, which were deposited there from this Plexus event, in order to identify their items. His procedure was as follows: 1) Each item was marked with a white round label and numbered. 2) A name of reference was assigned to each item. 3) The list of items, their number and name was recorded by the researcher in a logbook.

Step 2: on April 10 1994, he sent a letter to a group of Plexus participants, following the delimitation of the study, asking for their collaboration. After few weeks, the artist as researcher contacted them to supply a full explanation on the purpose of his request.

Step 3: The researcher outlined his field research procedures in his notebook with time and space in which the procedure took place. He identified relevances and placed them in chronological order. Plexus participants recollections were written either recorded as interviews. In the case of the recorded interviews, the artist as researcher took care that these were transcribed and translated from their original language. These transcriptions were approved and also re-edited, in some cases, by the Plexus participant, before the artist as researcher could proceed further in his interpretative procedures. Within the deadline of June 15 of 1994, indicated in his letter requesting collaboration, he received few written recollections.

In November 1994, with the assistance of a member of his Dissertation Committee, Prof. Angiola Churchill, he was able to pull off a series of sessions of oral recollections by N.Y. participants. Then, these oral recollections were transcribed from tapes. It became evident for the artist as researcher the infeasibility to proceed to the accomplishment of the organization of a panel discussion forum with participants, as it was stated in his letter requesting collaboration. Therefore, this step was drop out. He gave back to all participants their transcripts collected in 1994 and 1995, receiving few approvals and editing within a period of a year. Recollections by Plexus participants are fully reported in Chapter IV and in the Appendix A.

From summer 1994 to end 1996, the artist as researcher travelled around various locations, from New York to Italy, (Rome, Cagliari and Carloforte), Dakar and Amsterdam, examining all available Plexus records and relics, collecting what it was possible to remove and documenting what was not possible to remove from the premises. All records examined and/or collected were not specifically related to the project under study. He studied the collection of records and relics, item by item, to determine how texts, images, objects, symbols, related consistently to the ongoing project under study. The researcher examined Plexus records at the following sources: on board of the Elisabeth boat, in Carloforte; at Franco Meloni's computer in the University of Cagliari; at Gaetano Brundu's Plexus Storage in Cagliari; at Anna Saba's in Cagliari; at Giancarlo Schiaffini' and Fabrizio Bertuccioli's in Rome; at Assane M'Baye' and Youssouph Traore's Club Litteraire David Diop in Dakar; at Willem Brugman' and Frans Evers's in Amsterdam. At this step of the field research, the researcher viewed 3153 pictures, 3888 negatives, 75 videotapes and 25 audiotapes. He viewed methodologically all video tapes, conducting also an insider phenomenological experience, as follows:

In Time 1, he attended the view as well as fully possible conscious of his double identity of participant as well as observer of the recorded art experience.

In Time 2, after few minutes of silent reflection, he wrote a description of his aesthetic experience on these screenings, tape per tape.

In Time 3, with a blue colour code for an "editing" procedure, he marked what from Time 2 in interviews or written recollections he considered to be relevant, following Schutz's system of relevances, for his further "speed-up" description of experiences.

Editing: meta-critical analysis of phenomenological descriptions which adopts a system of marks for the sake of avoiding extensive re-writing. Speed-up: tendency or strategy of individuals in an industrial and technological society to perceive or judge human behavior in terms of the clock-time required to accomplish a specified task; e.g. the measure of productivity, intelligence, creativity, or goodness. In academic and artistic contexts the "speed-up" is operative when stipulated meanings or scientific explanations displace experiences and descriptions of experiences because they are quicker.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ David W. Ecker, ed., "Qualitative Evaluation in the Arts", p. 17-18, 1981.

From the fall 1994 to the summer 1996, the researcher with his stock of knowledge at hand examined all collected records, relics, and notebooks of his field research. Because of the huge quantity of materials, assembled over 12 years, it became on evidence that it would be totally unpractical to classify all them. He reduced the numbering of the records and relics under investigation just by the items related to the two boxes, A and B, sealed at the closing act of the Rosenberg Gallery event, in November 1993. These items were considered by his stock of knowledge at hand inclusive of all other records and relics related to the study.

The researcher applied in the beginning a phenomenological deconstruction approach, starting with his “close reading” of the first item of the box A, which was labelled A1 on the inventory made at Alfa Diallo’s in 1994.

Figure 1

Plexus Black Box Item A1



George Chaikin and Giancarlo Schiaffini, Rome, 1991, photo by researcher.

A1 was a marginal photo, placed outside the box, on its covering plastic strip. It reported the image made in Rome, in 1991, in the house of the researcher, of Giancarlo Schiaffini and George Chaikin, in front to the *Haddamard Matrix* blueprint made by George, while holding the *Colombina* boat, some video and audio tapes, and two small black and white photos, made in 1990, at the same house, showing David

Ecker holding a paper sheet with written *Cambio di Rotta* (Change of Route) with Giancarlo Schiaffini holding an image of a red coral tree with the Don Cherry's Buddha statuette, Lynne Kanter holding an apple and the researcher holding in one photo a *Plexus Campbell's* can and a Nuraghic mutant statuette and in the other photo holding the *Colombina* cat.

After his "close reading" of the item A1, the researcher began to deconstruct phenomenologically all the other *Plexus Black Box* items to identify relevant features and invariables. Following the model of "the artist as researcher," he started to develop a glossary of the most frequent words and concepts used by Plexus participants, as a "*practical corrective strategy*."

A practical corrective strategy that my students and I employ as artist-researchers in our investigations of living traditions around the world is to develop a glossary of terms in the language of the master artist/artisan/craftsperson of a particular tradition.¹⁶⁰

Glossary

Art Opera or *artopera* is the name by Butch Morris and Sandro Dernini for a multi arts format based upon an improvised interaction of many art forms, made by a conducted improvisation. It is built through a modular construction process which follows a "libretto" made by one or more authors.

Art Co-Opera or *art co-opera* is the name by Leonard Horowitz, developed with Sandro Dernini, for a multi arts format made through *Plexus compressionist art process*. It is built through a modular construction process of individual art contributions, of any kind, converging into a collective "antilibretto," mutually made by collective understandings, imaginations and emotions.

Art Logic is the name of the Plexus strategic map by Sandro Dernini published in *Passport for Plexus Serpent*. Its is what in anthropology is known as life logic.

¹⁶⁰ David W. Ecker, "New Directions for Art and Art Criticism from a Multicultural Perspective", p. 5, 1992.

Art Slave Ship is the name of a metaphorical art slave installation made in occasion of the Plexus artopera *Eve*, held in New York, at CUANDO, in 1986.

Colombina is the name of a little toy boat, almost a copy of the Libertè de l'Art boat, transformed by Silvio Betti in a Plexus art messenger, to carry on board the Columbina Reconciliation Project. It is also the name of Maria Pia Marsala's little cat.

Compressionism is the name given by Leonard Horowitz to the Plexus art process, experimented in artoperas, artcooperas, Purgatorios Shows, and in all Plexus photo group shots. It is made as an interactive compression and expansion of time and space, in which one plus one is equals three.

1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium is the name of a consortium established on March 10 1989 in New York among individuals and representatives of academic and cultural institutions to organize a cultural navigation program in 1992 on the occasion of the 500 years anniversary of the Columbus's landing in the Americas.

C.U.A.N.D.O. is the acronym for Culturas Unidas Aspiraran Nuestro Destino Original. It is the name of a community cultural center located in the Lower East Side neighbourhood of Manhattan.

Eating Art is the name of a concept by Sandro Dernini, built upon the idea to relate socio-biologically art to food.

Elisabeth is the name of a 200 tons fishing boat of Carlo Dernini, berthed in the port of Carloforte, in Sardinia.

Haddamard Matrix is the name of a drawing of an optical device made by George Chaikin, following a mathematical configuration.

In Order to Survive is the name of an open call statement by William Parker performed in 1984 in New York, as a Lower East Side street community event.

I.C.A.S.A. is the acronym for International Center for Advanced Studies in Art.

I.S.A.L.T.A. is the acronym for International Society for the Advancement of Living Traditions in Art.

Libertè de l'Art boat (Freedom of Art) is the name of a little toy boat transformed in a Plexus art messenger by Gaetano Brundu in 1988.

L.I.A.C.A. is the acronym for Italian League of Alternative Cultural Associations. It organized the first cultural slave market show in 1978, in Rome.

Made in the '80s for the '90s is the name of label of events consciously made in the '80s to be consumed by the critic consumer of the material culture of the '90s.

Modular construction is the name of a facilitatory theatre process by Willem Brugman, to allow individual energies to work together.

Ningki-Nangka is the name of an African invisible mythological serpent, as well as the name of the open call by Assane M'Baye inviting artists to go to Dakar for the Plexus Serpent art coopera.

Nuraghic is the name of the Bronze Age culture of the Mediterranean Sardinian people.

Plexus Art Money is the name of Italian money bills transformed artistically by Micaela Serino in Plexus money.

Plexus Black Box is described by Mitch Ross as follows: *None knows what it is and what they are doing with it. But it allows all Plexus people to feel part of that culture and to make their own definition of it, which is fine because more information goes into and more information has to be defined.*

Plexus Boxing Ring for Freedom is the name of a large poster with original signatures collected during Plexus art journey. It was made with leftover posters of a theatrical show at the Metateatro in Rome and used to frame the stage of the *Plexus Art Slavery Group Shot* held there in June 1988. The poster shows the famous image of Muhammad Ali returning to his corner after knocking out Cleveland Williams in 1966.

Plexus International Art Slavery Manifesto Group Shot is the name of the open call for artistsgroup photos against the slavery of art, launched by Plexus International in 1988.

Purgatorio Shows is the name of large multimedia events, with hundreds of artists at the same time, within an *atelier des arts* environment, which allows performing all kinds of possible art forms and languages.

The Artist in the First Person is the name of the artist as a cultural independent producer. It came from the name of an Italian cultural program organized by Sandro Dernini at New York University in 1981.

The Buddha is the name of a statuette of a Tibetan Buddha that Don Cherry gave to Sandro Dernini at the Shuttle Theatre, in New York, in 1984. It is on board the Elisabeth boat, in Sardinia, since 1985.

The Door of No Return is the door at the House of the Slaves in Goree Island, off Dakar, Senegal, from where African slaves were embarked to be sold in the Americas.

The Indian Chief is the name of a statuette of a Native American warrior given to Sandro Dernini by Mikey Pinero at the Shuttle Theatre, in New York, in 1984.

The Nuraghic Mutant is the name of a statuette of a Nuraghic warrior with four arms, four eyes, and two antennas. It is associated to ancient Nuraghic oral tales reported by prof. Raimondo Demuro.

The Voyage of the Elisabeth is the name of the I.S.A.L.T.A. project proposal presented by David Ecker, for the survival of the masters of the living traditions in art.

Time Art is the name of a concept by Ralston Farina relating art and time to gravity. It is used in Plexus to escape from gravity and to fly over the gravitational weight of Western rationality.

World Art Bank is the name of the Plexus project proposal for the opening near the House of the Slaves, in Goree island, Dakar, Senegal, of an international art fund, produced by the artists in the first person, for the survival of the artists outside the artworld market system.

Procedures of Interpretation

The researcher started his hermeneutical phenomenological investigation by applying the four operational rules of Don Ihde¹⁶¹, described in Chapter I.

First, as an artist-researcher he fully attended and described his own experience of *Plexus Black Box* and of the others's participants. Second, he delimited the focus of the field of experience, following Idhe's second operational rule, by framing within his insider Plexus experience. The Idhe's third rule was to avoid any kind of hierarchic understanding of the field of experience by the *horizontalization* of all phenomena of experiences. This procedure prevented the researcher to take too fast decisions concerning the hierarchic values of some features as more important or fundamental than others. As fourth procedure he looked for the invariants of the experience as essential features of the study in order to understand the directional shape of experience, "the intentionality," the correlation of what he experienced with how he experienced it, "the mode of being experienced."

The stratification model of the five different levels of discourse proposed by Ecker and Kaelin in "The Limits of Aesthetic Inquiry: A Guide to Educational Research" was applied by the researcher to screen and to identify all different levels of discourse in *Plexus Black Box*, looking for invariants. The procedural steps by the researcher were the following: first, he experienced *Plexus Black Box* and perceived recollections of other Plexus participants as a *lived* experience of it; second, he made a reflection upon his experience and other ones, noting what was relevant following the system of relevances, described by Alfred Schutz in *Reflections on the Problem of Relevances*.

The researcher moved from the bottom of the stratification, where he placed the *Plexus Black Box*, to the top of "the ladder." He started his interpretative procedures by underlining in his field research notes with a yellow or blue colour mark if that note was relevant for his experience, experienced as an artifact or as an art performance/event, which it is placed by Ecker and Kaelin at the bottom of their taxonomy. What he believed for his stock of knowledge at hand was related to a

¹⁶¹ Don Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology. An Introduction*, 1979.

metatheoretical level, at the top of the *ladder-schema* made by Ecker and Kaelin, he marked instead with a red colour code. This procedure facilitated later the identification and understanding of Plexus invariants as overlapping meaningful underlying themes of the study. He analyzed as topical relevances images and texts emerged during the epoché he made during his field research experience by following the system of relevances proposed by Alfred Schutz in terms of their referential adequacy. Those relevances, grounded in his stock of knowledge at hand, after verifications with other Plexus participants, were by him re-casted in order to be further investigated.

The researcher in order to *grasp as such* prevailing lived presence in his insider experience within his etic preparatory procedures, performed a series of artificial voluntary acts of reflection through which he could experience *Plexus Black Box* from more than one single horizon, looking for intrinsic relevant structures.

The stock of knowledge at hand of the researcher as interpreter, as sedimentation of various previous experiences, determined his system of interpretational, topical and motivational relevances, from which depended his capacity to reflect from more than his own immediate cultural point of view.

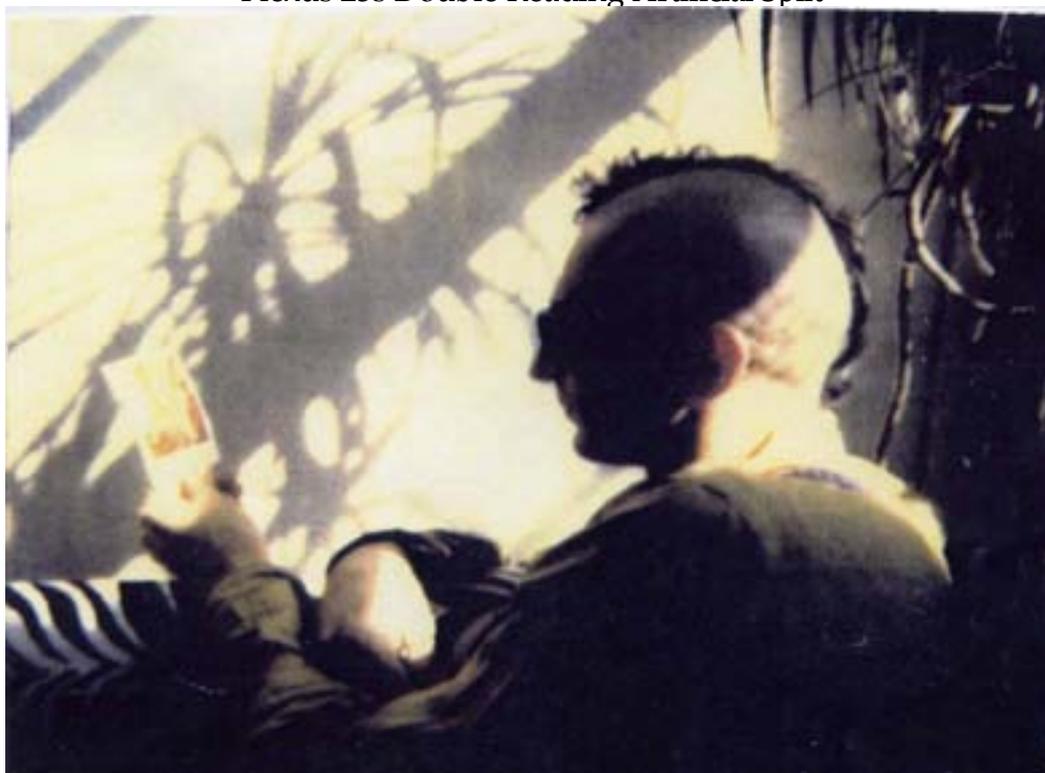
The researcher was conscious of his actual interest as Plexus 23s at the margins of the field, while he was performing artificially the system of relevances, and in turn his motivation created the structurization of a “voluntary” thematic center and of its surrounding horizontal margins. The Plexus 23s “actual interest” of the researcher as an “insider,” while giving acknowledgment to the limits of the level of his investigation, allowed him also to define it as the borderline of a limited part of *Plexus Black Box* to be questioned and placed under inquiry.

The autobiographical system of relevances of the researcher, who was conscious of Plexus 23s prevailing lived presence, at any moment of his interpretational procedures, guided his interest in making decisions regarding the investigation and, in turn by bringing inside marginal materials from the background, determined the horizon of the thematic hermeneutical field of the study. He applied the insider's

“stock of knowledge at hand” in a “step-by-step analysis” to predelineate the lines of his inquiry by selecting as his first artificial delimitation or determination of the segment of his experiences of the project under study, the lived experience of Plexus 23s, which allowed him to assume that kind of necessary “*counterpoint structure*” and “*artificial split*” of the unity of his personality, described by Schutz¹⁶² and reported in Chapter I.

Figure 2

Plexus 23s Double Reading Artificial Split



Researcher looks at his photo as Plexus 23s, photo by L. Kanter, New York, 1986.

Alfred Schutz points out that all questions are interrelated with the other and that there are not isolated questions, and those hidden in the margin of the field, may turn to be in the ongoing process of reflection topically relevant of the thematic center or “kernel.”

His Plexus 23s' motivational relevances lead the researcher to learn how to act on his interpretative decisions, understood as sedimentation of previous experiences, constituted the system of his topical relevances, which in turn led the system of

¹⁶² Alfred Schutz, *Reflections on the Problem of Relevances*, p. 12, 1970.

interpretative relevances on which the artist as researcher built his interpretative choice, resolving artificially his initial doubt to have a true and correct interpretation. Having not a privileged position upon which to start to build his system of relevances, but experiencing all together and not chronologically, the researcher, gained freedom from previous sedimentations by performing a continuous shifting from his initial artificial move of the deconstruction of the first item A1.

He modified gradually his horizontal interpretations, coming from each main topic chosen at that moment from the turn of his thematic kernel, which was modified continuously by his shifting system of interpretational relevances. He created in this way different observational conditions, which in turn allowed him to have new additional interpretatively relevant material. This shifting process was followed by the researcher until when, the problem at hand was sufficiently clarified, and he solved his suspicion or doubt of the correctness of his insider emic procedures.

Each reader has his/her own angle of interpretation depending upon his/her personality, education, and culture. "Even if we can achieve distance," it was stated by Hans-Georg Gadamer "we actually interpret an interpretation."¹⁶³

Therefore, within the pluralistic perspectives of the contemporary philosophy of art, in spite of tireless efforts to discover the definitive word of "interpretation" and by the renunciation of the certainty of an "objectively" interpreted experience, the researcher deconstructed insiders accounts and papers, reported in Chapters IV, V, IV and Appendix A, as revealing multicultural sources for a pluralistic understanding of *Plexus Black Box*, against a single dominant position of interpretation of the project under inquiry.

The researcher, in accordance with the emic paradigm shift, looks at collected insider accounts with a deconstructionist eye.

Following Jacques Derrida's deconstructionist strategy, pointed out in *Margins of Philosophy*, he challenges methodologically the traditional and central hierarchical setting of Western modern philosophical inquiries, which give to the interpreter a

¹⁶³ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, p. 68, 1986.

dominant position, by placing his interpretation at the margins of insiders accounts in order to produce his multicultural study.

Overturing the dominant position of the Western hierarchical setting of texts as a culturally context-bound position, the researcher presents as equally relevant all insider understandings as significant components of his multicultural hermeneutical aesthetic inquiry.

Then, to deal with the problem of the different levels of discourse in *Plexus Black Box*, the artist as researcher used the Ecker - Kaelin's Taxonomy, pointed out in "The Limits of Aesthetic Inquiry: A Guide to Educational Research," by placing *Plexus Black Box* at the bottom of its "ladder." He proceeded from *Plexus Black Box*, the event, to the top of the "ladder," passing through its five levels of inquiry as described in Chapter I.

In the last part of his study, he grounded his multicultural interpretation upon a kind of emic-etic re-casting hermeneutic process, made by his "close reading" of insiders understandings reported as direct quotes.

At the end, the researcher presents a multicultural understanding of *Plexus Black Box*, made not as a conclusion but as a critical contribution, that he leaves with an open ending, because, he argues, it is about a still ongoing art project.

Figure 3

A Plexus Deconstructionist Double Reading Example



Micaela Serino and Giancarlo Schiaffini “appointing” themselves in the Plexus Art Slavery Manifesto Group Shot of Rome, Rome, 1988, photo by the researcher.

CHAPTER IV

DOUBLE WRITING AND DOUBLE READING

In this Chapter, as a strategic interpretational procedure, the researcher applies the deconstructionist model of the “bifurcated writing” of Jacques Derrida to present a “double reading” of “insider” accounts from the earliest historic players of Plexus in parallel with the researcher’s interpretation.

By means of this double, and precisely stratified, dislodged and dislodging, writing, we must also mark the interval between inversion, which brings low what was high, and the irruptive emergence of a new “concept,” a concept that can no longer be, and never could be, included in the previous regime. If this interval, this biface or biphase, can be inscribed only in a bifurcated writing (and this holds first of all for a new concept of writing, that *simultaneously* provokes the overturning of the hierarchy speech/writing, and the entire inherited order and invading the entire field), then it can only be marked in what I would call a *grouped* textual field: in the last analysis it is impossible to *point* it out, for a unilinear text, or a punctual *position*, an operation signed by a single author, are all by definition incapable of practicing this interval.¹⁶⁴

The researcher’s account is intentionally written at the margins of “insider” accounts with the purpose to allow them to have relevance in the study, claiming that, in aesthetic inquiries “insider” artists as well as their emic accounts, do not have fully received a relevant academic consideration, which instead is given to the formal analysis of the “outsider” researcher as an objective interpretation. The following “bifurcated writing” is presented with the intention to offer a “double reading” of “insider narratives” as well as an overall insight of employed researcher’s interpretational strategies. He applied the Derrida’s *bifurcated model* as a coherent shifting procedure with the Schutz’s system of relevances, reported in Chapter III. As direct quotation, therefore, the researcher did not use any grammatical device for editing emic accounts reported at pages’ left margins of this Chapter, with a single spacing, with no indented paragraphs, when they are transcripts from interviews, to give a sense of their flowing speech.

¹⁶⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, p. 42, 1981.

“Insider” Narratives

Giancarlo Schiaffini

Transcript of the interview made by the researcher in Rome, 1995.

It is approved by Giancarlo Schiaffini.

<p>The seminal idea for setting up the multiform structure complex of Plexus was conceived in 1981 in the kitchen of east 6th street, in New York, by Sandro Dernini, Antonello Neri, Massimo Coen and I. There, we were talking about how to organize a space to perform many different kind of music. This conversation began some years before, in 1978, when I started my collaboration with Sandro in Cagliari. I played some concerts of improvised music and we were talking about the role of improvisation, the role of music, the role of performance and of performance art and of any kind of performance you may think of. So there we placed the seed of Plexus several years before it came out. In the kitchen, in 1981, we were three performers and a maitre a penser, a provoker, to stimulate our creativity, all of us were and we are in several performing arts, music theatre, movies as well, dealing with improvisation in different sites, sometimes we play music completely composed organized, sometimes totally improvised, with all possibilities between the two extremes. When you perform or improvise, even in a theatre piece, a lot parameters you have to consider, which are may be the skeleton of such a work, in the definition of my work and of a project like Plexus. For me it is very difficult to define my work. First, I like my work. I do my work because I like my work. I find some ways of life, desires, aims, in my work. I think that I am not one dimension man, all my work is often very various, as composer, sometimes I compose for other people, sometimes for myself, sometimes I just write simple structures for improvisers or just improvise other structures, generally. For me it is important to be involved in the work, from its birth time, from the first concept of the work, and thinking that the work lives just in the moment in which it actually performs, because all composition speculation, planning, are finalized to the moment in which the work will takes place</p>	<p>Schiaffini offers an historical description how the seminal idea of Plexus began as an open multi artform concept. He describes the open features of Plexus artform, as a performing art, bringing together all art fields, music, theatre, poetry, plastic arts, multimedia arts, art performance. Schiaffini presents himself as not one dimension person who likes what does. He underlines the creative value of the improvisation process in the development of Plexus process, dealing with many parameters and components, at the same time, and placed in different sites and times. In his historical avant-garde recollection, he underlines the experimental role of open musical forms in the Plexus art process. He recalls how John</p>
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and that is the real moment in which the work acts. Plexus is a great reality, with many faces and different realizations, my contribution to Plexus was bringing all my experience in performing arts, in music, in theatre, in different ways to make art, in brainstorming which served to setting up the ideas and Plexus events within a larger landscape. I worked with John Cage, Luigi Nono, with several international groups and theatre directors, even with certain importance in improvisation and many of these pieces, on which I worked, were fine written but started with collective improvisation by the soloists works. We know that beyond the improvisation, beyond the actual happening, there is a long work of years, a hard training which makes that the improvisation never can be improvised and happenings just cannot happen. They are the results of years working on structures, ability and attitude to modify structures in a moment, an attitude to relate oneself to the other ones working with you, it is a certain kind of discipline or a certain kind of rigorous study and very long and very alive. I worked with many different realities in the field of art and Plexus may be is one of the most complex, one of the most universal, in Plexus we find so many different kinds of performances of art, actions and exhibitions, which is important as a kind of summa of all works since the Living Theatre, Cage, all schools of improviser art. So we have Plexus, may be, as a big container, just in the sense of not a neutral container but of something which can contain several different artforms, performing arts, a container which is in relationship with what is contained and allows to cross, to link different realities, different musicians, performers, different facts, which may be never do otherwise. Plexus performances were so rich in interrelations among all elements playing and involved which was just not a collection of different form of art or players, with different languages, minds, and from different art fields and characters like painters, theatre players, musicians, singers, poets, dancers, videomen, but inside there was a big cohesion, a quite big interaction and relationship among participants, which was born there in the action and it was not planned from us in advance. What was in the

Cage and others experimented open forms through an improvised musical collective process, where only few elements were fixed. Schiaffini recalls also how these performances that took place in the '60s, with the purpose to generate new art forms and exchange new ideas and energies, provide the ground for a revolt against the formalism of modern art. By underscoring the hard task of modifying structures, moments and people, he foresees Plexus like as a kind of "summa" of the avant-garde previous experiences. For him, "Plexus Black Box" was made in the '80s as a synergetic container of insider realities interconnected with outsiders, speaking many different languages and communicating to each other, both members of a multifacets complex. For Schiaffini, "Plexus Black Box"

<p>'80s in art and in the '90s is different. The '80s was a period of time which was very hard against the performance art. It was very difficult to work for the performer artists in the '80s because the performance art, which in the late '60s and '70s was "a la mode," it was not anymore in the wave and the media and the organizing structures were not anymore interested in it. Now in the '90s it seems there is a new opening toward improvisation and performance art, in a different way respect the past, with people more curious, with a more accurate interest. It is a positive signal.</p>	<p>allowed many different worlds and artforms to come out. His open vision overcomes the closed artworld concept, build upon the dominant misleading use of the word "art" as referred only to visual art.</p>
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Mitch Ross

Transcript of the interview made by researcher in New York, 1994.

It is approved by Mitch Ross.

<p>Plexus acted in 1982-83 as an art performance space, for one and half year, and then in the mid of 1984 moved in the Lower East Side as The Shuttle Theatre which acted more as an art jazz night club. I started during this period to exchange ideas and books on the work by Nobert Wiener with Sandro. Plexus Black Box as concept came later. It is a computer term but it is also a metaphor for what cannot be defined. In all computers programs what they do not understand goes in a black box. Plexus Black Box project is basically a container for all miscellanies archetypes of art which are not explainable, when they not fit in the existing stereotypes of artworlds of music, theatre, visual art, etc. Plexus every two -three years goes into a reborn phase, redefining what is going to do and Plexus Black Box serves for it. The big problem that Plexus is facing is money. A community-based urban intelligentsia, placed in different cities in the world, is the today core of Plexus and each has theoretically pieces of the original archetype of Plexus Black Box turned into a metaphor. None knows what it is and what they are doing with it. But it allow all Plexus people to feel part of that culture and to make their own definition of it, which is fine because more information goes into and more information has to be defined. Plexus Black Box is an artform of artificial intelligence which about nobody knows in advance because it is made as an happening with no money. In the end, the methodology of the conceptual "Plexus</p>	<p>Mitch was the m.c. of <i>Plexus 6, a Zone for the Next Zone</i>, in 1983, at the Plexus performance space. He conceived it as an open container for all miscellany of performances which could not fit in "traditional" multimedia shows. He explored new ideas and their implications, like cybernetics and Norbert Wiener's concern of "the human use of the human being." He describes Plexus cybernetic retroactive control and its several "reborn phases. "Plexus Black Box" for him is an open artificial artform that offers the</p>
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Black Box" may be considered as the methodology of the construction of a Faustian toy, in which more non useful information goes in there. In turn, in Plexus more metamorphosis will come out.

opportunity to many people to feel part of a cultural context, without knowing in advance the full picture of it and their reason for doing it.

Figure 4

Plexus 6, A Zone for the Next Zone



Mitch Ross, Plexus performance space, New York, 1983, photo by Lynne Kanter.

Figure 5

Goya Time, 1985, New York



CUANDO, New York, 1985, photo by Jeffrey M. Day.

Lynne Kanter

Transcript of the interview made by the researcher in New York, 1995.

It is approved and edited by Lynne Kanter.

<p>In 1982 I took pictures at the Plexus performance space in Chelsea and I was the first to document Plexus events on an ongoing basis and following Plexus on the Lower East Side and then in Rome. In 1985 I performed in the multilayered Plexus event <i>Goya Time</i>. Since 1986 I created a kind of iconic Marilyn Monroe character, "performing" and taking Polaroid photos of what was happening on stage. In the early 80's I continued to portraits, often using mirrors, which led to the Plexus recall performances where I made photos of the photos in the photos of previous events in which were other photo in the photos, etc. This led to Polaroid book collaboration with Sandro who started to "play" with all Polaroid's, creating a kind of art altar installation. My experience in Plexus during the 80's was a receiving of energy connection within a world wide group. Plexus gave a broader context and a deeper meaning to my artistic endeavors than they had in isolation. Suddenly, I was less isolated in the world. To my mind, the world became more fragmented in the 90's age of Internet.</p>	<p>Kanter describes Plexus compressionist process of taking "photos in the photos" of Plexus participants holding photos of other Plexus events, where photos of preview events were also showed up, creating new art operatic forms as characteristic features of "Plexus compressionism" theorized by Lenny Horowitz. Kanter also points out how Plexus experience increased her artistic awareness of being part of a collective art effort which turned into a healing art process, a release of energy from art.</p>
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Willem Brugman

Transcript of the interview made by the researcher in Amsterdam, 1996.

It is approved by Willem Brugman.

<p>My story with Plexus started when Plexus was a physical location on the west side of New York city. A retrospective of my work and collaborations with people took place in that space. I was a performer and I performed there <i>Christopher Columbus Reflections from His Deathbed</i>. Without me realizing it, as soon as I entered in that space and put this story on</p>	<p>Brugman describes his "lived" intense experience in Plexus as a performer as well as a theatre director. In 1986 in the Plexus</p>
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stage, I had already started a journey through universal mythology. Before I know it I was already playing a character in that journey, in this case the character of Christopher Columbus. Since then, I made in New York several participations in Plexus art co-operas like *Eve* and *The Night of No Moon*. When I left the United States and went back to Amsterdam then Sandro was very fast to pick me up and hook me back up with him in Sardinia and in Rome. So this became a fantastic experience in terms of our communication. We established ourself in Gavoi village in the center of Sardinia with 160 artists from all over the world. From there we sent out a communication into free space, outer space, it was a message of freedom for art and communication. That was an extraordinary development, of course, from just coming in solo and being focused on the aspects of your own piece of art and from there going to the ocean of story telling of the universal mythological journey and to move from the sea into the electric sea and go into outer space. This is basically what I did with Plexus up until I came back in Amsterdam to build a Plexus working station. So we went around trying to find out where there were very specific archetypal elements of the journey' story telling. In Amsterdam was an artist Hans Hiemers who had brought elements from the black slaves who had fled the plantations in Surinam and had gone back into the jungle, called themselves marons and tried to find a life back into nature away from all these opposing structures. After all because of the slave trade by the Dutch they were brought over from Goree to Surinam. So we built this working station. Back in Amsterdam, we're talking 1987-88, it was important to make a Plexus working station where all kinds of different ethnic groups could meet in order to prepare the commemorations around the Atlantic Basin in terms of 500 years of colonial history in the light of Christopher Columbus. And Amsterdam, of course, there were all the points of departure of the slave trade. So Goree, was also reconnected in there. In this level, where my participation in Plexus took on absolutely magic, realistic dimensions. I now found myself playing parts as a performer that more and more is focused on aspects of male identity, if there is something

"artopera" *Eve*, he experimented with Butch Morris the concept of "modular construction" as a combination of music, dance, theatre, video, and architectural stage design.

"Modular construction" in Plexus was used by Brugman as a participatory facilitating process to merge, in a transparent multi-layer energetic design, all possible art forms without a dominance of one form over the other one, without a hierarchic directional structure. It is shaped on the idea of a gathering of energies coming together into the Plexus "artcooperas" from many different art fields. The Plexus organizational principle for him has to be an architectural strategy, mutually made, for the gathering of energy into the box as "artcooperas," where many different individuals, from different fields and disciplines, in time and space, follow a poetic

as universal as male identity, then how would it be expressed. "Kosai", which was the war cry of the marons, who were the slaves who had fled back into the jungles of Surinam, and then tried to find their own existence, became a very important symbol for freedom. The symbol that was used at that time was the ark. Hans had built a huge ark that was located in the center of the harbor and everybody who was passing by could see this symbol of continuity the ark of course being a symbol of gathering, collecting, safeguarding all kinds of elements of life. So after Sardinia, Rome and Amsterdam I then did some preliminary explorations, with Sandro in Dakar, in the House of the Slaves built by the Dutch. We knocked on that door of no return and we demanded a new contract between the peoples no longer a contract of buyers and sellers and transporters and in between people, but a contract that would explain the birthright dignity of every human being. After Dakar adventures then at the end of the 80's and into the 90's we were back in Rome and participating in what for me became the last kind of Plexus event I found myself again playing like a male archetype playing a patriarchal dressed in uniform carrying a transparent globe having a stop watch in terms of time, carrying a compass, knowing the directions of the wind. As an act of juxtaposition in 1989, in Rome, at our performance in which we closed the Black Box, I reopened it because I was looking for a loose end, the loose end that was perhaps already in the box. Because I thought that the story was not finished, the first phase of the development of Plexus had maybe come to an end and I also believed that in any repetitive process however varied its outcomes you have to make on purpose a mistake in order to let the end out. In '89, I felt that there was no time to close the box, the story was incomplete. That many contributions were still lost, they were still at the sea, they had not been delivered yet, in order to close the box the whole body had to be in there and we knew that legs were missing, and bits and pieces of "la macchina corporea," the body machine of Plexus. Modular construction is a design and choreography of energy: it is an organizational principle and it is a strategy, for what I call a design and choreography of

storyline. Plexus creative environment for him allows the possibility of fitting many individual expressions into an overall collaborative work, in an art coopera. He describes how the modular construction process has its roots in the historical avant garde, through all its contemporary development, from De Stijl, to Dada, to surrealism, arriving at John Cage and The Living Theater. He explains why he had to reopen "Plexus Black Box" and why its closing in Rome in 1989 was not feasible due to incompleteness of ingredients, depending upon its open identity. He argues that too many legs were missed in the Plexus "bodymachine" to allow the closing of the box. Brugman sees this operating process made by a collaborative work as a "macchina corporea," a Plexus bodymachine made by bodies and minds working naturally

energy. A modular construction, as it happened to take place in the art cooperas, there were so many different individuals coming from many different fields and specialties that had to be organized in time and space, and they had to be organized also in a story telling way so a modular construction is an organizational principle by which every fragment, every subject, every object that takes part in the total generic energy explosion and is guaranteed its own identity. I maybe can only say it in a more poetic or esoteric sense, if a drop of water joins the ocean, it does not loose its characteristics. This is the principal of modular construction whatever effort or excess energy spent in the process will find its constructive expression of possibilities in the overall work. Well, a modular construction is a facilitating process that allows the individual energies to pass through and to gather a purity of energy which maybe can be approached by talking about light. So if I go back to modular construction and make a relationship with Butch Morris - in my work in New York it must have been in 1985 when we worked at the Wooster Groups Performing Garage and we did *Image of None* - it says it already - could the experience of reality have lead to images of none or nothing. In it, a writer was invited to write a few things and he had some opening lines that explained very well in a poetic way the nature of modular construction. The lines by Seiku Sundayada - an AfroAmerican writer - said "the ocean must be built from a common law which says that everything goes into the ocean that lines and lines like these swell the sea and grow like sea weed unless you can see the properties of kelp in the tangled modern mass it's merely dirty water." So you can say that modular construction is a law seems to be natural law of allowing, inviting acknowledging and respecting the contributions that people make. Here I'll make a quick reference to the writer Franz Kafka who, in his book about America, confronts us with the nature theatre of Oklahoma. The essence of the nature theatre of Oklahoma is that there is a place for everybody in the nature theatre of Oklahoma - in this concept there is something to be done for everybody. So you can also say in that way the modular construction is

together, allowing, inviting, acknowledging and respecting the contributions that people make. For him, in "Plexus Black Box," liquid forms and fluid energies are involved that cannot be kept separated or kept out of the box, "as drops of water in the sea," as he poetically describes it. Before using the modular construction process in 1986 in the "artopera" *Eve*, conducted by Butch Morris, another "insider" participant of this study, Brugman and Morris started to experiment this art process in 1985 at Wooster Group Performing Garage. It was an experience of different states of reality leading to poetical images of emptiness. He describes the modular construction process as a natural form of theatre open to everybody. A natural concept which, he argues, Western culture has almost lost. It is, however, still present in many forms of

<p>participatory process for everybody. Well you can say that in theatre in different parts of the world but especially in the non western world, there are still many collective, community- based theatre programs. It still seems to be a very natural working process. In the west, though, it has disappeared. If you want to have some historical references about that it you can say that perhaps the largest modular construction for a long time was the Living Theater. The Living Theater turned it around better than talking about theatre is to talk about life. So they were the first ones who really broke out of the restrictions of theatre in its physical space in time and location. I think that when we go into the history of the 20th Century art, Franz is kind of a specialist in that field. So here we have to think maybe about De Stijl – people who gathered around architecture and design – then maybe we have to zoom on Dada – people who tried to bring in surrealistic aspects - so we have to think about the surrealists. We have to think about the area in the beginning of the century by which music, dance and theatre as a music theatre concept came together. We have to make sure that Black Box will tell us after what had happened, what dramatic event had happened up to the point of the present that life would continue that certain things are and will be preserved.</p>	<p>community-based theater in other parts of the world. He argues that in the history of the avant-garde art movement in the 20th Century, there was always a tendency to merge together music, theatre, dance, visual art, and architecture that is the historical background from where Plexus modular construction is coming from as an open multi-arts and multi-forms participatory process for everybody.</p>
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Miguel Algarin

Transcript of the interview made by the researcher in New York, 1995.

It is approved and edited by Miguel Algarin.

<p>Plexus Black Box is an attempt to document many different activities made by Plexus in the mid 80's and in the beginning of the 90's. It is made to document the ultimate statement by artists about this last decade of this millennium when old diseases which have mutated are coming back in new forms. What we are learning is that life in the planet cannot be lived without accepting pain and death as an active part of it. My poetry readings with the Nuyorican Poets Cafe at the Shuttle Theatre, in 1984, dealt with the theme that artists played the role of the elite of the working class. If we do not plant our feet on the sidewalk we will lose our constituency. The rich will buy us, but they will not stand by us. My poem <i>BodyBee</i></p>	<p>Algarin understands Plexus aesthetic value for the intensity of its artistic process, creating concepts, turning occasions into art events, addressing many artistic, social and life issues related to the last decade of the XX Century. He recalls the first</p>
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Calling from the XXIst Century is a call for the poetic mind and the scientific mind to meet because we create metaphors that the public at large understand. We must create information about our biological body and our universe with clear simple language understood by the general public. The aesthetic image of Plexus is the volume of the artists' free participation in mass events such as the group shots in which a hundred artists gathered together in the middle of East Sixth Street just for a photo. The occasion in Plexus is the aesthetic sense, making an occasion into a happening and reflecting on that for its historical value. This is what I saw in Plexus, it plans its own historical value. The art operas were occasions where an enormous amount of work was made to collect a huge quantity of players together and then the event either works or does not work. When it works, we all contribute to an idea which is itself in the making not made but "making." In that way the value of the aesthetics of Plexus is creating artistic concepts that hit emotions.

BodyBee Calling from the 21st Century
by Miguel Algarin
XXXIII

After transplanting/repairing body organs,
at what point is self still of woman born?
after becoming a beehive of transplants,
grafted parts, after replacements.
is there still a self from woman born?
after biological break down
and up to date repairing,
will self be a patch-work-of-spare-parts?
2019: Synthetic membranes introduced
to repair stomachs, intestines, kidneys.
2021: Fluorocarbon liquids/base for
artificial blood/patented in 2008/
will with synthetic polyvinyl hydrogel replace
natural vitreous liquids.
2034: Chemical muscles: still shunned
by body engineers developing techniques
to force the body into regenerating
its missing or damaged parts.
2045: Techniques for grafts to brain area
controlling physiological processes
are in daily use/all work on cerebral
cognitive thought areas is advanced
though performed selectively.
2050: Alien tissue ruled accessory
graft receiver retains the I original/
foreign tissue subdued and acclimated

group photo shot of the musicians, poets, other artists performers, and, the local community supporters gathered together in 1984 in the middle of East Sixth Street, between Avenues A and B in front of the Shuttle Theatre. There William Parker performed his statement "*In Order to Survive*," and all the others gave their contributions. Algarin speaks about "the volume" of the free participation of many artists and people in Plexus events. The pitch as well as the resonance of these events grew over these years, and, since 1989, compressed into a frozen "black box" that created that strong aesthetic intensity that Algarin points out as the aesthetic image of Plexus, able to reflect collectively on its own historical significance.

<p>by self of woman born still risking to persist. after body, after repairs, after transplants, after self, after beehive of organs, after grafts, after patch-work replaces self of woman born, after after, after that! What and where? (54)</p>	
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Figure 6

BodyBee Calling from the XXIst Century



Willem Brugman and John Howard, Gavoi, Sardinia 1987, photo by Stefano Grassi.

Alfa Diallo

The transcript of the interview made by the researcher, in New York, 1994.

It is approved by Alfa Diallo.

<p><i>La Maison des Originals</i> is a place particular in the community of Loisada for selling art works. The idea of <i>One On One</i> was always there in Africa. It is a collective vision. The understanding of this idea is the coming together 2 or more people and this is very important to be understood. The poem <i>One on One</i> was written in early 80's and I performed it, during the <i>In Order to Survive</i> community event, at the Shuttle Theatre, in</p>	<p>The African concept of "<i>One on One</i>" was brought in Plexus by Alfa Diallo in 1984, on the occasion of his poetry reading, in 1984, at <i>In Order to Survive</i></p>
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New York, when Plexus moved there, in the Lower East Side, in 1984. The poem *Loisada* is about my experience to live in the Lower East Side. There is nothing stopping people to travel, everyday there are boats with people going to Africa. It should make sense if Plexus has a boat of black Americans going back to Africa and if you have a boat of all different people going back to Africa. It is a very important point to be very careful to understand the difficulties of organizing the art slaves boat. In all these years, since 1982, Plexus was a positive experience for me, because it was a celebration of coming together, which by itself is positive. It is not easy to recall so many different events starting from 1982 when in Chelsea Plexus acted as a performance space. In 1987 I became a member of the board of directors of Plexus in New York. My poem *The Box* was used to close "*Plexus Black Box*" event, in 1993, at NYU Rosenberg Gallery. The poem *Presence Africain* in Plexus was used in 1986 as statement of Plexus position. The experience with Plexus is like with New York, a melting pot made by many people which you cannot leave any out. The beauty of Plexus is that we were strong enough to be able to cross all conflicts, beside the fact that we have different origins, the feeling that we have, we were able to do what we had to do without to put in front our confrontations to block all the project and to go together and to move further the project to go on. There was a mystic force behind us to pass through all the economic difficulties and to answer to the question: for whom I am doing this?

Loisada by Alfa Diallo

The sound of people
 Moving together in Loisada
 Where you meet all nationalities
 It is the sound of all these different languages
 You hear as you walk down
 The streets and avenues in Loisada
 So don't leave anyone out
 Because everyone is able and
 No one is here to stay
 The sound of Loisada is
 I, You, Them and Us
 All walking down
 The street and avenues of Loisada

community-based street event in the front to the Shuttle Theatre, in the Lower East Side of New York. Since then, "*One on One*" became part of the history of Plexus and of its international community-based efforts.

One on One is a universal African vision of a collective concept that the poem "*One on One*" of Alfa Diallo has incorporates together with his radical memory against all colonialist and racist discriminations.

Alfa's poem *Loisada* was used as opening statement of the New York University Lower East Side Summer Institute of Living Tradition in Art and his poem *The Box* was instead the opening statement of the last Plexus event under study. In Plexus, Alfa's poems are used to state clearly the afro-position identity of Plexus, to defend human rights and to go together.

Arturo Lindsay

Transcript of the interview made by the researcher, in Cagliari, 1995.

It is approved by Arturo Lindsay.

<p>Plexus for me has been a journey and like in all journeys there are great and challenging moments to be recalled. As my contribution to Plexus, I thought of 3 mayor areas in which I made a contribution: intellectual, administrative and artistic. In the intellectual area I had many brainstorming meetings in committees, in bars and restaurants, by telephone, etc. in which Plexus vision, aesthetically, politically, socially, was hammered out. In the administrative area I was part of the board of directors of the legal Plexus entity in New York. But it failed because of Plexus fluid and dynamic identity which could not stay within too many constraints as they are requested by an administrative legal form. We set off with a structure of a community organization in the Lower East Side around 1984-86. I give my recollection as time 1 of a reflective action. I started with my performances in 1984 at the Shuttle Lab, in the Lower East Side. I like to recall my performance: '<i>Artist contemplates the fate of whose who speak of freedom, dedicated to Mandela</i>', at CUANDO in 1985. In 1986, on occasion of the departure of the art slaves ship art opera, at CUANDO, I made one of my first <i>Homage to Ana Mandieta</i>. In Rome in 1987, I buried under ground, in the garden of Gianni Villella, a wood statuette ancestral messenger. I participated in a futuristic art parade in the streets of Trastevere, before taking the ferryboat to go to Sardinia. In Gavoi, Sardinia, where I worked with others artists for 4 days with the art materials we found there or we brought with us. During the construction of my installation, a wood box, the first historical box in the history of Plexus, I secretly buried in a ceremony with Lorenzo Pace and Miguel Algarin, the second statuette, in bronze, of the ancestral messenger. The wood box with the signatures of all the artists was burned in a ritual performance. On this fire Sandro Dernini burned his clothes. The ashes of the ritual ceremony were, from the ferryboat coming back to Rome, spread out into the Mediterranean watersea. My work, which I am still doing, was inspired to the notion of ancestry and of messengers. In 1989 my</p>	<p>Arturo Lindsay is the Plexus Ancestral Messenger.</p> <p>His Plexus vision is like a journey through the sea of his experience of so many Plexus events and activities, crossing many different times and spaces.</p> <p>He claims the impossibility for Plexus as a fluid form, free from bondages, to be able to deal with more formal, compact, solid, economic or legal constraints.</p> <p>Lindsay's ritual art performances since the time of 1984 left a series of marks in the history of Plexus, starting from his performance on the sidewalk on the street of the Shuttle Theatre to his burial performance in Rome in 1987. The researcher as artist participated in 1988 with the retrieval of the statuette, "Ancestral Messenger" It was then buried in the island of</p>
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<p>participation was related against the celebration issue in 1992 of Columbus's landing in the Americas. This controversial issue let began a period of dialogues, confrontations, arguments and debates, among all us in Plexus, about how to recognize the historical anniversary without celebrating it with a Plexus event in 1992. The issue of reconciliation raised up from their strong beliefs against a Columbus's celebration and the Columbus Consortium as well as the Well Being Consortium grew up from this reconciliation Plexus claim which is the direction on which Plexus is moving now. Some of the originals ideas of Plexus Black Box are ideas which have been pursued since the beginning of Plexus like environment and now well-being, health, food, etc., which came out of some creative thoughts we were exploring in New York. My role in Plexus has been the ancestral messenger since when he became a founder member of the original Plexus group. Plexus Black Box is build upon the recording and documenting processes and activities of Plexus in the past 12 years. Many activities of what is happening today in the postmodern art world can be view as an expansion of the vary ideas of multiculturalism, radical democracy, ethical issues and cultural diversity in thoughts and ideas, that we, first, explored before in the mid 80's, as positive terms of reference in a broader open context, which was also the reason why we could not put too much efforts in the organizative structure of Plexus. This brings back also the claim that democracy is chaos. Plexus has operated a lot with chaos from where many creative art works came out. That kind of chaotic driving force brings us together today but the difference with the past it is that it seems that we are more experts, after so many years and so many mistakes, to pull up together all these diversities with the respect of the diversity of opinions. Columbus issue was a good training for all of us to grow up. Plexus Black Box has not a defined definition. It does not work in definition terms. It is a fluid thought which grows, changes, moves differently for each of us. It is made to not be framed. For my definition it is a fluid idea, with a lot concerns, it is a radical democracy, it is chaos.</p>	<p>Goree by a group of Plexus participants. His statuette became a symbolic coordinate for the landing in Goree of Plexus art freedom journey. His ancestral art boxes were the first Plexus boxes made to keep alive Plexus memory. Lindsay's disagreement on the original celebrative departure of the Columbus Consortium changed the initial route correction of Plexus toward the new idea of "reconciliation". He claims that Plexus was one of the first postmodern movements that in the early '80s started to explore the multicultural issue of radical democracy, social chaos, and cultural diversity. Lindsay argues that for its own internal diversity and fluid nature, "Plexus Black Box" cannot be defined by art theories.</p>
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Figure 7

Voyage in the Planet of Art, Part III: Plexus Black Box



Jeroen Heuvel, Willem Brugman, Andrea Portas, Frans Evers, Ciro Ciriaco, Lynne Kanter, Roberto Federici, Antonio Caboni, Karl Geiringer, Antonello Dessi, Anna Piccioni, Arturo Lindsay, Piero Cianflone, Xavier, Elsa Rizzi, Giancarlo Schiaffini, Ridotto del Colosseo, Rome, 1990, photo by Victor Ibanez.

Figure 8

Goya Time, 1985, New York



Butch Morris, CUANDO, New York, 1985, photo by Jeffrey M. Day.

Butch Morris

Transcript of the interview made the researcher in New York, in November of 1994.
It is approved by Butch Morris.

<p>My contribution to Plexus came from composing improvisation and conducting improvisation which deal with a community of improvisers and which lead to my definition of Plexus Black Box as a multidisciplinary way for vary kind of artforms to work together and for different artists to collaborate together. My first performing association with Plexus was with <i>Goya's Time</i> in 1985 and during this process came out the theory of the art opera which characterized Plexus collaboration. It was characterized by multiplex levels of perspectives of the event and its particular surroundings open to be followed in all possible direction by the audience. The result became a cooperative art product of a collective imagination. Plexus artform was truly about understanding a particular moment in time and history. What was new in this artform is a significant individual collective art expression of different vision of the same idea as it was in <i>Goya's Time</i> presented by 23 visual artists. The artists working with each other were the big new artform in Plexus at the significant level of what they produced. If this collective artcoopera model should be understood as a community based art project and performed experimentally as such in schools, it could produce significant collaborative results.</p>	<p>He conceives an improvised conduction as a collective multiform art process that makes possible for many artists to work together with different experiences and visions. This improvised conduction lead together with the modular construction process to the creation of Plexus "artopera" merging all artforms together as a collective imagination expression. Plexus artform for him understood the particular historical time in which was produced.</p>
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David Boyle

Transcript from the interview made by the researcher in New York, 1994.
It is approved and edited by David Boyle.

<p><i>Plexus Black Box</i> is a recent theoretical development, made by a group of Plexus members in order to find some closure for Plexus. I started to get involved with Plexus at the time of the Shuttle Theater, in 1984, in the Lower East Side of New York, when it was located in 6th street in the basement of a Homesteader building run by one of my favourite mentors, Sarah Farley. She was a founder of a group called L.A.N.D. (Local Action for Neighbourhood Development). She pointed out that Plexus should be</p>	<p>Boyle, as a local community activist in the Lower East Side Community, describes his insider experience from a community homesteader perspective which offers an emic understanding of</p>
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<p>supported in the community, and I went with it. Her support was a result of the community oriented nature of Plexus. When I met for the first time Sandro Dernini I was impressed by the way in which art was presented as a nutritional element in our life and in our community. Contact with art and cultural events of all sorts enhanced the well being of the person by reducing stress and making the mechanism for the metabolization of food run smoother. I realized that Plexus created a momentum for many local artists to move toward large mass events as community groups actions, that we called the CUANDO's period. The beauty of these community actions was that they were organized with no advance preparation but only with an open call sent out from person to person and friend to friend only few days before. You had to live in the community to know about it. The event was so short, like one hour or few hours that it was over before all the people were in. Plexus did for the first time the instant art event. if you didn't know about it before it started it was over before you could get there. The artists used anything that they could find to make art for these events which never stayed up for longer than a few hours. One of these mass community art events was made in 1986 at CUANDO, it was called <i>The Purgatorio Show</i>, for the departure of the metaphoric art slave ship. Here a large quantity of artists, 220, had to deal creatively with the use of a limited space, 4x4sq. ft., for each, the configuration of the spaces forming upon the floor the shape of the ship. On that occasion the artist Gianfranco Mantegna used a tall ladder to expand in vertical his art piece dedicated to Joseph Beuys. He attached anchors into the ceiling and hung over his art space in a parachute harness. The doors of the entrance were made by a bronze sculpture piece by Eve Vaterlaus. My homesteaders organization offered the security of the show and we were dressed with warriors costumes that we were given from the Costume Collection. There were Roman centurions, Vikings and we did not allow any people from the audience to go inside where all artists, with their helpers (more than 350 participant persons) where preparing the show. When the audience came in, they found all the room full of people and smoke from a theatre smoke machine, colored lights and sound</p>	<p>"Plexus" and of "Plexus Black Box" as a community-based art project. He presents the Plexus period at CUANDO as a collective effort against the gentrification process in the Lower East Side. The way the information was spread out during the Plexus large mass events described by Boyle, it is a clear understanding of how Plexus was rooted in the Community, as part of the local underground art network. These underground art networks historically have played an important role in the avant-garde culture, as refuge for the genesis of new ideas and artforms. David Boyle describes the Plexus compressionist process as coherent with the compression and the freezing of Plexus into a box, together with its history, relics and records. These documents were able to be not obsolete because they were appointed as art works.</p>
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<p>from a 14 piece jazz orchestra. 6 or 7 camera persons were moving in the crowd documenting the event. It was the first time that the documentation in Plexus took visibility more than just as a video documentation and started to become a form of art in and of itself. The video cameras moved through the drifting smoke with their little red lights blinking in schools like fish. Plexus as an art movement contributed to the integration of different uses of art media in new art forms, actively extending the point where documentation stops and art begins. As in the case of the Plexus tradition to make photos called group shots which turned into an art form. It was Leonard Horowitz who pioneered this Plexus compressionist use of the photo of the photo. In each event, Plexus members assembled together for large photos, like family picnic photos. Groups of Plexus artists answering the open call were photographed together. These "group shots" became bigger and bigger. By 1988 Plexus artists were intentionally holding up the photos of the previous group shots while creating new group shots. These photos were then brought to subsequent group shots achieving the effect a group of people holding a group shot which was holding a group shot and so on. Producing the effect of compressing into one photo content with a lens could be amplified again. The community was part of it and this was why Sarah Farley supported Plexus. During my participation in Plexus, I met many Plexus members and I discovered that there were many different interpretations about what Plexus was. What was interesting for me that each definition of Plexus did not exclude other definitions and I felt that this multiplicity was a positive sign of openness. In Plexus I felt there was an insider theoretical framework for a community intelligentsia for the support of Plexus concepts like compressionism by Horowitz or modular construction by Willem Brugman, who came up to build different Plexus art operas with no rehearsals, on the concept that it was not time to know in advance all what was going on stage but to know only some modules of the productions, technical modules, acting modules, lights modules, music modules. Without the need to go together in time and space before the show, going in conversation without known what</p>	<p>They were used as a community source of knowledge, as a recursive art device for memory and for the survival of Plexus.</p> <p>Boyle's emic account describes in the particular how a Plexus CUANDO event looked like, giving in this way an insight understanding why "Plexus Black Box" was so full of records and relics. Boyle points out how this documentation turned to be the first survival step of Plexus to grow by allowing participants to share it as part of a common art experience, within an open social environment.</p> <p>David Boyle was the insider who participated in 1989, in Rome, at the conception of the "freezing" of Plexus into a "Black Box".</p> <p>Boyle, also, built one of the two boxes (the squared wood box) that was one of the two boxes of the event held at the New York University Rosenberg Gallery, in 1993, which ended with Boyle</p>
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<p>the others modules were doing, until when they were all together on stage. In reference of <i>Plexus Black Box</i> I suggested the freezing of Plexus into a time capsule concept as it was <i>Plexus Black Box</i> because we felt in that time, 1989, there was a diminished interest in maintaining Plexus movement and it had an impasse which could compromise its future. Knowing from history that art movements that art movements have tendencies to collapse, instead to wait for it, I proposed to froze it in a conceptual art form as it was conceived <i>Plexus Black Box</i> until when the conditions were not improved.</p>	<p>performing with his truck the repatriation of "<i>The Living Box</i>" into the community.</p>
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Figure 9

Purgatorio Show



David Boyle and Rolando Politi, CUANDO, New York, 1985, photo by A. DiMartino

Eve Vaterlaus

Recollection written by the artist in New City, N.Y., 1994.

<p>I recollect contributing, as an artist, to three of the Plexus events. The first was <i>Goya Time</i>, during which a large group of artists worked from a model who presented herself as Goya's Clothed Maja. The event was open to the public, who strolled among the working artists as they drew, sculpted, painted, photographed, etc. I drew the nude Maja on paper I had silk-</p>	<p>Eve Vaterlaus performed "<i>Eve</i>" at the Plexus <i>Eve</i> artopera, in CUANDO, in 1986, leading the escape of the art slave ship from</p>
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screened with a photo of the surface of Lake Michigan.

The second Plexus event was *The Night of No Moon*, a memorial to Ralston Farina.

This was a huge exhibition with hundreds of artists who entirely filled a big old school building, known as CUANDO, overflowing out into the roof, and filling every space with art & performance. I worked in the large old empty swimming pool, where I installed my Diver's Tomb, five huge photo blueprints of divers and swimmers installed on the white tile walls around the pool. The diver plunging from air to water is an obvious and old symbol for the migration the soul makes in death.

This piece was technically difficult, if simple in concept. The photo blueprints were so large that they had to be exposed in the dark at a great distance for very long periods of time in order to print. I had to completely darken my entire loft for about a week and live with the ongoing exposures of my images, which supplied the only light. Then, when it came time to install the images, printed on fragile blueprint paper, in the pool I found that the walls were continually damp from condensation and it was difficult to stick them up, but I did find a solution.

This piece was very satisfying in every way, beginning with shooting the photos, through solving the execution, the final look of the piece, and it was completely new work for me.

The third Plexus event in which I took part, *Eve*, also pushed me into form of work I had never done before. I made *The Gates of Paradise* for the entrance to *Eve*. The gates were two doors made of 16 relief panels, like old bronze cathedral doors. The panels showed Adam & Eve in the Garden, the expulsion from the garden, and, on the outside, how a life difficulty gave rise to human culture, art, literature, war, & etcetera, which was not necessary or possible in paradise. For the night of the performance of *Eve*, all of the contributing artists were exhibited with their work. I took advantage of the occasion to present myself in a fig leaf, which I had always wanted to try, but had never gotten around to before.

Thus, my experiences with Plexus always demanded growth and change and new achievements in my work, as well as

the New York Artworld. Eve describes accurately her difficulties as an artist dealing with an eclectic complex of problems rose from the creation, execution, and installment of artworks related to three Plexus events performed at CUANDO.

She offers a complete emic understanding of her qualitative artistic process in the solution of problems. Her "insider" insight provides a clear understanding of the artistic process conceived as a "problem-solution-problem continuum," as pointed out by David Ecker in "The Artistic Process as Qualitative Problem Solving".

Eve Vaterlaus describes her experiences with Plexus as challenging moments of growth and of new achievements, made by working with "large gangs of artists".

With 220 artists, in 1986, at CUANDO, in the Lower East Side,

<p>growth through meeting and working with large gangs of artists I would not have otherwise met.</p> <p>I am a painter and sculptor, I graduate from art school, R.I.S.D., and then travelled widely by land and sea.</p> <p>After my travel & a very brief marriage, I lived and worked in Brooklyn for about 11 years. I work in many media because for me different ideas demand different forms. I am also stimulated by the process of finding solutions to difficult technical problems and I enjoy researching for the work as well as making it.</p> <p>The type of idea that most often inspires me is personal and subconscious, subjective, yet immersed in natural phenomena: water, plant life, animal & mineral.</p>	<p>Eve Vaterlaus, dressing only a fig leaf, performed <i>Eve</i> at Plexus artopera <i>Eve</i>. At the Plexus event, held in 1993 at the Rosenberg Gallery, her artwork <i>Homonculus</i> symbolically represented the "<i>Living Plexus Black Box</i>"</p>
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By applying his stock of knowledge at hand, the researcher from the large quantity of records of "Plexus Black Box" identified two artworks by Eve Vaterlaus as "bifurcated" examples to end this "double reading" Chapter.

The first is a photo of Eve Vaterlaus, performing *Eve* at *Eve* artopera, in 1986; the second one is the images of her *Homonculus*. These "bifurcated" images are offered by the researcher to open new insight of understanding of artists' growth, change and achievement in life.

Figure 10

A Plexus “Bifurcated” Reading



Eve Vaterlaus performing Eve in *Eve*, New York 1986, photo by J. Day.

Figure 11

Homonculus



Artwork by Eve Vaterlaus, NYU Rosenberg Gallery, New York, 1993.

CHAPTER V

AN HISTORICAL EMIC ACCOUNT BY THE ARTIST AS RESEARCHER

In this chapter the artist as researcher as an “insider” offers “in the first person” his account of the story of *Plexus Black Box* and its origin. As one of the Plexus founders as well as Plexus 23s active participant, he conducts his “emic” reconstruction in a chronological order.

His chronological account was made by following also the verification procedures by Barzun and Graff,¹⁶⁵ described in Chapter III, and in the organization of the study, reported in the Chapter I. The researcher, by applying the model of “the artist as researcher,” conducted his historical account with continuous verifications with other insiders, and by following his stock of knowledge, verified repeatedly through his own collection of historical Plexus records and relics.

A Narrative in the First Person by Plexus 23s

First, I would like to introduce myself, I am Plexus 23s, a creative survivalist from the island of Sardinia, at the centre of the Western Mediterranean sea.

Plexus 23s is my individual artist identification number within Plexus International Recall Network. My nationality is Italian but my culture is "Sarda" (Sardinian). In the island of Sardinia around 2000 B.C. there was a Bronze Age culture, named Nuraghic culture. The Nuraghic age from 1600 BC to 500 BC was a very complex society which built a system of thousands stones towers on the island of Sardinia. Very little is known of this culture. It had a very strong and long history in fighting cultural

¹⁶⁵ Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff, *The Modern Researcher*, 1985.

colonialization since the time of the Phoenicians, Romans, and Spaniards on until the current Italian cultural trend.

Figure 12

Plexus 23s Nuraghic "Insider" Identity of the Researcher



Sandro Dernini, CUANDO, New York, 1986, photo Jeffrey M. Day.

I have a double cultural identity, "Sarda" (Sardinian) as well as Italian. To accomplish such a complex reflective challenge to write in English my emic account, in a chronological order, I am dealing with my English and Italian language difficulties. These difficulties come from my individual personality as well as from my inner cultural "Sarda" identity which resists against the many forms of domination, including economic and linguistic. My writing in English is a challenge to my thought processes. I am cognizant that, after seventeen years in New York and three years in London when I was eighteen, my English has not improved. I start to understand that my language "resistance" is part of that kind of *resistance of cultural identity* that it is described by the prof. Giovanni Lilliu¹⁶⁶ as a characteristic of the Sardinian people. My ancestral Nuraghic identity has reinforced my fighting

¹⁶⁶ Giovanni Lilliu, *Costante Resistenziale Sarda*, 1971.

against the domination of the Artworld and of its Art "Isms" as well as has deeply influenced later my Plexus actions against the slavery of art.

In 1979, in Rome, I participated to conceive a provocative "cultural slave market show" organized by the L.I.A.C.A. (Italian League of Alternative Cultural Associations) to defend the freedom of cultural expression and association in Italy.

In the '70s, the L.I.A.C.A. had an important and not yet documented role in the defence of cultural freedom, within the particular political and cultural context of that historical period when in Italy the police attempted to close performance and alternative cultural spaces as underground sites of revolt and protest against the christian democratic-right wing government. One of the places where the L.I.A.C.A. members Giovanna Ducrot, Massimo Vincenti, Stelio Fiorenza, Cristina Torelli, Amerigo Sbardella, Roberto Farina, used to meet was my house, at Piazza San Giovanni della Malva, in Trastevere, at the historical centre of Rome. I was member of L.I.A.C.A. as representative of Spazio A, the first performance space that I opened in 1976, in Cagliari, Sardinia, with Marilisa Piga, Pietro Zambelli, Piernicola Cocco, Annamaria Pillosu, Paolo Salis, Sandro Carboni, Paolo Cossu and Emilietta.

After my moving in New York, in 1980, I conceived and codirected with Luigi Ballerini, director of the NYU Italian Studies Program at the French and Italian Department, the Center for Italian Contemporary Culture New York University. In the beginning of 1981, at the New York University, I developed a cultural program, named *The Artist in the First Person*, as a NYU interdepartmental and interdisciplinary cultural initiative. Its purpose was to introduce contemporary Italian artists to the New York art community, through NYU related departments. Each event was presented by the artist as the producer of it. At that time, Italian contemporary artists were poorly supported by the Italian Cultural Institute.

In the fall 1981, at New York University, Giancarlo Schiaffini, with Antonello Neri and Massimo Cohen, presented a performance of Italian contemporary music. It was an occasion for us to discuss the limitations which were confined national cultural institutes in presenting new experimental art works. In several all night long

talks in the kitchen of my small studio, in the Lower East Side, we tried to identify a new format of cultural space where artists from all art fields and cultures could have the necessary freedom to express themselves. We started to envision a place where we could develop our researches as well as to have free and open critical dialogues among us and with the audience, with no mediators (critics, curators, dealers, etc.) of the Artworld. We felt necessary for the artists in the first person to create their own channels, spaces, self definitions or no definitions, in order to survive, from the interferences of the artmarket.

In the beginning of 1982, in New York, Roberto Brambilla and Gianni Longo, founding members of the Institute for Environmental Action, proposed to me the opening of a new cultural center in a 7.000 sq.ft. row loft, free of rent, as part of a larger real estate project that they were developing in the Chelsea neighbourhood of New York. Richard Flood, an art critic, as well as book editor and managing editor of Art Forum Magazine, who curated the show *Beast* at the art space PS1, accepted to join us. In June of 1982, in the row loft, at 530 West 25th. Street, we presented the Plexus project. Its presentation was conceived as a party dedicated to the modern gods of the modern cities. In the Plexus statement of mission, written by Richard Flood and reported fully in Appendix B, it was stated:

Plexus is about the city - any city, every city.
It is about the wonder of a skyline that won't stop climbing and a blanket of pollution that can't stop spreading. It's about an atmosphere that swells culture and swallows real estate. It's about a dream that is as illogical as soft watches and as seductive as the promise of immortality. Plexus is dedicated to the proposition that all cities are not created equal, only the people who inhabit them. It is further committed to the proposition that the people of cities are creative survivalists who refuse and acknowledge the laws of nature and who glory in adversity. There is, in the collective heart of the people of the cities, a wild, unremitting thirst for the impossible contradictions that make them simultaneous victims and victors. Plexus believes that the creative involvement of the individual can do more to enhance a responsive environment than all the bureaucratic machinations of infinity of public agencies.

Few months later, Richard Flood left the group. I contacted two night club organizers, John Hanti and Louis Tropea, who joined us in the renovation of the loft.

On December 31 1982, on the occasion of a big New Year eve party *The Garden of Fuzz*, the Plexus space opened as a night club. But, few days after, many complaints from the neighbourhood stopped the activity of the club.

Figure 13

Plexus Performance Space



530 West 25th. Street, New York, 1983, photo by Lynne Kanter.

On February 1983, we staged a preview opening of the new Plexus performance space with the dance performance *It's not the Hat – It's the Hair* by Marika Blossfeldt. On April 19, Plexus performance space started its activities with the world premiere of *Turtle Dreams*, an art performance by Meredith Monk, followed by a full spring program featuring *Paolov*, a theatre performance directed by Charles Guarino; *Cathode Cruel* and *Birth*, a new music and theatre performance by Fiction Music Theatre and Susan Landau; *Disorder/Discipline/Future*, an art performance and 365 postcards exhibition by Gianfranco Mantegna; *Boomba* and *Mission Impossible*, theatre performances by Ily Huemer; *Spectre Nymph* and *Living Set*, a dance performance by Ellen Fisher; Electronic Art Ensemble; Virg Dzurinko; *Bagman Theater* by Peter Muny; and *Labyrinth*, an art installation by Paolo Buggiani.

In June, Roberto Brambilla and Gianni Longo ended their partnership in Plexus, and as landlords, they decided to charge to me a high rent of \$ 2500, to continue Plexus activities. I took this risk and I became also the legal representative of Plexus

International Center for Urban Resources, a non profit organization. In the summer and fall, I produced an intense art program in the Plexus performance space. With Arleen Schloss, I organized *New Cohesions*, an experimental multimedia arts program, featuring: *Raw Sanivlam, a Cruel WarGame*, an audiovisual performance by Giancarlo Schiaffini and Lorenzo Taiuti; *How She Sees It*, an art performance by Arleen Schloss; *Order Eat with Des's Refuses*, an art performance coordinated by Michael Kean; *Moving Still Film*, a film screening by Richard Sanca; *Up & Down the Elevator*, an art performance by Stephen Wischert; *Codes of Abstract Conduct*, a new music performance by Craig Burk Group; *Darts*, a new music performance by John Zorn; *Babylon Breakdown Babylon*, a 3 days Reggae Festival; *Plexus 6 A Zone for the Next Zone*, a multimedia art cabaret showcase, with Mitch Ross as master of ceremony, presenting, *Taking Off*, an environmental painting by Pierre Dorion, Myrian La Plante and Aude Simard; *The Third X-35 Hour Show* by VAP Rafael and Arnold Wechsler; *Rockercise: Rap+Breakers; Punkballet; Fire in Progress* by Tracy Sherman; Stuart Sharp; Helene Guattary, Patrice Casanova; Joel-Sokolov; *Fight Pain and Win* by Doug Rowe; *Salome* by Maroon Azuri; and *Westoxication*, by Willoughby Sharp, Susan Britton, Julie Harrison, Wolfgang Staehle.

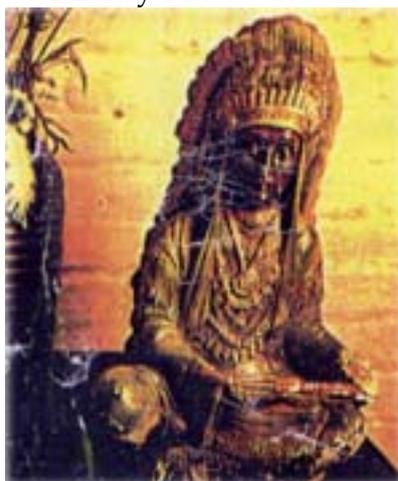
In March 1984, without any notice in advance, I was forced by the landlords Brambilla & Longo to stop Plexus activities because they need back the loft. Therefore, I lost all my economic investment and public credibility, creating in my life serious financial and personal problems.

In April, Brian Goodfellow introduced me to Mrs. Sarah Farley, an old friend of Billie Holliday and a charismatic leader of the Lower East Side homesteader community. Mrs. Farley managed a thrift shop with Melody D'Arnell, in the ground floor of a burned building, between Avenue A and B, on the Lower East Side of New York City, at 523 East 6th Street. She offered me to move in the ruined building and to live in the third floor, with no glass in the windows, no water, no electricity, only a portion of the floor and ceiling, with very tough people living in the other floors. It was very hard and cold to survive there. Together, with my friend Giuseppe Sacchi

and Brian Goodfellow, we decided to open a community cultural space, in the ruined basement of the burned building, totally full of garbage. We cleaned the basement, while at the same time I made more liveable the third floor. Later, Karl Berger joined us. On June 13, we opened the Shuttle Theatre, as a community art space only for card members, under the umbrella of Plexus International Center for Urban Resources, in order to have a legal status. With Julius Klein, I served as bartender, there Mikey Pinero gave me an Indian American chief statuette, house protector of his Nuyorican Poets Cafè, a Lower East Side community space founded with Miguel Algarin, at that time closed. I placed the statuette, at the Shuttle Theatre's entrance and its image became the cover logo of our membership cards.

Figure 14

Mickey Pinero' Recall



The Shuttle Theatre, 523 East 6th Street, New York, 1984.

The Shuttle Theatre started its activities featuring, Genevieve Waite with Robert Arron, Tony Love, Tigressa, Julius Klein, Ralston Farina, Trevor Stuart, Gary Goldberg, Billy Bang, Jemeel Moondoc, Rashid Al-Akbar, Petra Plecko, Rrata Christin Jones, the Gamala Taki Band with Karl Berger, Babatunde Olatunji and Alfa Diallo. We had, in the beginning, a program of art exhibitions, curated by Carlo McCornich and Steve Kaplan, which was shifted into *The Artist in the First Person*, an art program with no curators, coordinated directly by the artists, with Joan Waltermath, Arleen Schloss, Mickey Pinero, Luca Pizzorno, Ralston Farina, Julius Klein. Miguel Algarin

curated a weekly poetry reading program *Long Shot*, presented by Nuyorican Poets Cafe, featuring Allen Ginsberg, Mickey Pinero, Amiri Baraka, Pedro Pietri, Quincy Troupe, Robert Press, Bernadette Mayer, Andy Clausen, Miguel Algarin, and others poets. Through a very close collaboration with William Parker, the collective Sound Unity presented an intense community-based music program, featuring: Dennis Charles, Peter Kowald, Charles Gayle, Rashied Ali, William Parker, Roy Campbell, Daniel Carter, Rashied Bakr, Karen Borca, Jackson Krall, Ellen Christi, Alex Lodico, Patsy Parker, John Hagen, Dicky Dworkin, Dave Hofstra. *The Art World is a Jungle*, featured in a crazy hour 60 performances of 60 seconds each, directly staged by all performers as producers of this happening. On August 25, in front The Shuttle Theatre, in the middle of the street, we organized a community event *In Order to Survive* to stop the gentrification of the Lower East Side. Ms. Farley chaired the community event with Bruce Richard Nugent, the last in life artist from *FIRE!!*, historical black Renaissance magazine published in 1926, in Harlem.

Figure 15

In Order to Survive



Lower East Side, New York, 1984, photo by M. Wheler.

In that occasion, William Parker launched his *In Order to Survive open call*, as a statement to draw attention to the condition of the starving status of the artist as well as of the child in the community.

Few days later, Don Cherry, performing at the Shuttle Theatre with Mikey Pinero, gave me a little Buddha bronze statuette as his contribution for the development of a fund-raising community event.

Figure 16
Don Cherry's Buddha



Elisabeth boat, Carloforte, Sardinia, 1988, photo by the researcher.

In the Summer, an early morning, I was awakened up by an old friend of my father, Prof. Raimondo Demuro, an expert on the Nuraghic oral traditions of Sardinia, who was just arrived from there. He needed some assistance to find an American publisher for his Nuraghic tales. I introduced him to the writer Stephen DiLauro who wrote the introduction for his work. In September, at the Shuttle Theatre, I developed with Jeemeel Moondoc, Billy Bang, William Parker the Lower East Side Music Committee and together we organized the First Lower East Side Music Jazz Festival. In December, after the second Festival, Butch Morris and Will Power joined our Music Committee.

In January 1985, at the New York University, Prof. Angiola Churchill, co-director of the I.C.A.S.A. (International Center for Advanced Studies in Art), and chairperson

of the Department of Art and Art Education, invited me to give the lecture *The Artist in the First Person*, within her NYU course *Art & Ideas*. Few months later, Angiola Churchill invited me to be a NYU graduate assistant in her Art and Art Education Department to follow a Ph.D. program in art education.

In the Spring, Nilda Cortez, executive director of C.U.A.N.D.O. (Culturas Unidas Aspireran Nuestro Destino Original), a community civic cultural center, located on Second Avenue and Houston Street, invited me to organize there some events.

In May, at the CUANDO, we staged the Third Lower East Side Music Festival.

Figure 17

Goya Time, 1985, New York



Gloria McLean, CUANDO, New York, 1985, photo by Jeffrey Day.

On June 13, at CUANDO, Plexus presented the artopera *Goya Time, 1985, New York*, in which participated more than 80 artists, among musicians, poets, singers, dancers, actors, visual artists (all artists names are reported in Appendix C). It was a multi artforms event, which I created with Butch Morris and Gretta Sarfaty, focused on freely conducted interpretations of the same theme *La Maja*. Our purpose was to challenge the current question of who was the subject and who was the object in the

New York artworld, as well as to raise attention on the limitation on the artist's freedom by models and trends imposed from art schools. Paolo Maltese suggested showing slides with economic diagrams of the dynamics of the art trade in the market, as an historical perception of the contemporary art trend. In the gym there was in progress an *atelier des art* where artists Pedro Cano, Franco Ciarlo, Baldo Deodato, Michael Keane, Anne Jepsen, Julius Klein, Jorelle Kraus, Raken Leaves, Judy levy, Joe Lewis, Mike Lewis, Luca Pizzorno, Jill Lynne, Mekki Schmidt, Berns Naber, Vernita Nemeč, Robert Parker, Barnaby Ruhe, Eve Vaterlaus, Robert Younger, were working on the Maja's theme, while on the stage Gretta was posing as la Maja model. The choreographer Gloria Mc Lean performed with her dance company LifeDance the theme of *los Capricios* while a theatrical group, directed by Rajaa Fischer, with Lynne Kanter, Antonia Iacchia and others, performed the Spanish Royal Family. Slides of the art market diagrams made by Cristobal Senior were mixed with slides of the most famous "recline nudes" in the history of art, starting from *La Maja* of Goya, and projected at the same time with the slide projection of *Eighth of May*, the famous Goya's painting while the Royal Family performed the act of killing all artists working in the "atelier des arts."

In the beginning of June, with Leonard Horowitz, Arleen Schloss, Willoughby Sharp, Albert DiMartino and Sandro Dernini, we decided to organize at C.U.A.N.D.O. a large community art event dedicated to Ralston Farina, an artist friend of us who died few weeks before, and to his dream of escaping through art from time and gravity. On July 17, *Purgatorio Show '85, New York, in the Night of No Moon*, dedicated to Ralston Farina, produced by Was Inc. and presented by Plexus as a 3 hours exhibition open call for a future cultural community house in the Lower East Side. The entire five floors of CUANDO building were used, including a ruined basement with an old dry Olympic size swimming pool. 350 artists had simultaneous performances in the entire building so transformed in a total theatre art environment (I have reported all artists names in Appendix C). I coordinated the event with Ray Kelly and Ivy Winick. It was charged 99 cents as admission fee. A large quantity of

pennies were painted in yellow to be given back as money art for one dollar admission ticket.

Figure 18
Purgatorio Show 1985



Max Hardeman, Bruce R. Nugent, Willoughby Sharp, Leonard Horowitz, Albert DiMartino, Sandro Dernini, CUANDO, New York, 1985, photo by A. DiMartino.

Figure 19
Purgatorio Show 1985



Wess Power, CUAN.DO, New York, 1985, photo by. A. DiMartino.

At the end of November, my apartment and the entire Shuttle Theatre building burned in a fire accident, and I lost my living and working space, free of rent.

On February 27 1986, at CUANDO, Plexus presented the artopera *Eve: Escape for Donna Purgatorio from 1986 Anno Domini by the Multinational Chain Gang of Downtown New York*, featuring 220 artists (all artists names reported in Appendix C). It was charged again 99 cents for the admission. This time, pennies were painted in red as a money art change. The admission ticket, figured *Donna Purgatorio*, was made by Silvio Betti with an hole, sized to the red penny to be inserted in. In the printed program, we announced the escape of Plexus art slave ship from the New York Artworld control, to be land in the summer 1987 in the Nuraghic time of Sardinia, by crossing the sea of mythology and art history. The storyline of *Eve* was inspired from the work of the artist Anita Steckel. It was about the escape of Eve from the written history of art landing between the two fingers of Adam and God at the Sistine Chapel.

Figure 20

Eve, Purgatorio Show '86



Artwork by Anita Steckel, CUANDO, New York, 1986

As opening act, dancers dressed as prehistoric animals moved the audience inside the gym, through the *Gates of Paradise* made by Eve Vaterlaus, controlled by a group of squatters, dressed like ancient roman centurion, samurai and with other military costumes, with phallocratic weapons, and coordinated by the druid David Boyle. At the center of the gym, a metaphoric art slave boat was built as a collective installation made by individual installations of almost 100 artists, placed one next to the other one, chained together and to their works of art with the very long artwork *One Line* made by Ken Hiratsuka. At the center, the captain Ray Kelly stand next to an eleven piece orchestra and a large chorus conducted by Butch Morris, with Arleen Schloss near to him performing A's.

Figure 21

The Departure of Plexus Art Slaves Ship



CUANDO, New York, 1986, photo by Toyo

On the balcony, a theatre group, directed by Willem Brugman, performed the forces of the Artworld buying the artists sold in an auction as slaves with the penis dollars *Legal Gender* made by Anita Steckel, while thousands copies of the *Haddamard Matrix* of George Chaikin were given away to the audience. All the gym was full of smoke and coloured theatrical lights, while a slide show projected new art market

diagrams, revised from the past Plexus artopera *Goya Time New York 1985*. The slide show was projected on different screens with Anita Steckel's flying woman images in parallel with her radical images of Adolph Hitler and Nazi soldiers walking with their penis out. On stage, Bruce Richard Nuggent played our Black Pope, sitting upon a throne in front of which four actors dressed, as cardinals were eating a bread woman, performed by Anna Homler. A group of dancers of the Alfa & Omega Dance Company performed the escape of the Black Eve from the World Trade Art Center. I played a Nuraghic warrior attacking the Western culture and the Artworld. My head was half plain shaved and the other part full of long hair. I held a green statuette of Nuraghic mythological warrior, with 4 eyes, 4 arms, 2 antennas, and I wore an iron mask sculpture *The Minotaur*, made by Paolo Buggiani, and I was covered by the white Italian linen sheets by Patrizia Anichini Line, painted as works of art. With Barnaby Ruhe, I performed the role of the warrior of *Lady Liberty* played by Kirsten Randolph, holding a torch in fire and walking through the art slave ship installation to free all artists. We carried on stage a big iron sculpture *The Horse of Troy* made by Paolo Buggiani, and as a mythological attack against the Artworld Trade Center, we settled to free Eve. The arrival of the *Marlboro Man*, performed by Leonard Horowitz dancing the Charleston, ended the Plexus art opera. It was a compression of acts and people, in which so many artists from all art fields interacted within the whole environment by creating a new operatic art form, that Leonard Horowitz, later named Plexus *Compressionism*.

On March 1, at Joanee Freedom's studio, 93 Avenue B, we gathered with David Boyle, Alfa Diallo, Garrick Beck, Joanee Freedom, Leonard Horowitz, Arturo Lindsay, Butch Morris, Lorenzo Pace, Maggie Reilly, to write a presentation of Plexus to be presented in my trip in Sardinia and in Dakar toward the continuation of the art slave boat journey. We spent all night discussing about what Plexus was and how we could define it. Each one of us had her/his vision. Finally, after hours of non stop discussion, we arrived to the following statement:

To Whom It Concerns:

Plexus is a framework for global art projects.

These projects are simultaneous and syncratic presentations of science and art. Plexus respects and encourages the creative process of research, actualization and documentation. In essence, Plexus is an interdisciplinary multinational network for artists in the first person related together by art logic.

In May, in Dakar, with Gianni Villella, I met Mangone Ndiaye, who introduced me to the artists of the community of the Medina. Then, we moved to Casamance, where after many discussions with them, I wrote in French the first presentation of the Plexus global project, to raise local consensus toward the continuation of the voyage of the art slave boat toward the House of the Slaves in the Goree Island, off Dakar.

Kre M'Baye and Langouste M'Bow joined Plexus, and together, on May 15, at the African Cultural Center Malick Sy, in the Medina of Dakar, we presented the Plexus project, named *Plexus Mythological Journey: from Purgatorio to Paradise, New York, Sardinia, Dakar*.

In September, in Cagliari, at Cooperativa Centro Storico, with Gaetano Brundu and Cicci Borghi, we staged a performance installation *Fire!! Il Serpente di Pietra, An Universal Mythological Art Journey*. I presented the Plexus art slaves ship journey as a continuation of my experimental experience started in early 70's with Spazio A in Cagliari as well as of the first cultural slave market show made in 1979, in Rome, by the L.I.A.C.A. Few days later, in Rome, in collaboration with Gianni Villella, Silvio Betti, and Armando Soldaini, a former member of L.I.A.C.A., Plexus project was presented at the Soldaini's space Magazzini Generali.

In October, at Frank Shifreen's studio, in New York, together with Mitch Ross, Leonard Horowitz, Helen Valentin, Arturo Lindsay, David Boyle, Frank Shifreen, we started to have a series of meeting for developing Plexus as a multinational interdisciplinary recall network. In order to organize the 1987 *Serpent* event in Sardinia, we issued the *Serpent Open Call*, designed by Helen Valentin. At the end of October, at Fusion Arts in New York, I presented *the Serpent Open Call*, at the end of my phenomenological performance *Eating Art: Fresh Mozzarella, A Refracted Self-Portrait*. It was conceived for the course *Phenomenology and the Arts*, conducted by

Prof. David W. Ecker, as part of my Ph.D. art education program at the New York University. The performance consisted in having 23 artists, eating a mozzarella piece hand made by an Italian living traditional food master Mr. Di Paulo from Little Italy, and then expressing their individual taste, one by one. After, in the final act, we danced all together in a collective serpentine movement.

Figure 22

Serpent Open Call



Artwork by Helen Valentin, New York, 1986.

On January 1987, at Fusion Arts, it was presented *Plexus Passport for Purgatorio* as a project proposal for a retrospective book on *Plexus Purgatorio Show*. During the same time, Willem Brugman in Amsterdam presented the opening of a Plexus working station. In February, at the Studio of Antonello Dessi, in Cagliari, Gaetano Brundu, Ciccì Borghi, Anna Saba, Franco Meloni, Randi Hansen, Luigi Mazzarelli, Andrea Portas, Antonello Dessi, Enrico Pau, Luciano Rombi held with Antonello Dessi the provocative collective art show, outside the local galleries' system, *Bring Your Serpent*.

On February 18, at Patrizia Anichini Gallery, in New York, I performed *Do you think it is possible to eat Andy Warhol if you eat a Campbell Soup can?* I conceived it for the Prof. Ecker's NYU course *Phenomenology and the Arts*. I was inspired by the upcoming I.C.A.S.A. symposium *The Dematerialization of Art*. I invited Lynne Kanter,

Willoughby Sharp, Helen Valentin, Franco Ciarlo, Patrizia Anichini, Donald Sheridan, Bernd Naber, Peter Grass, and other artists to participate by eating a Campbell soup can and by answering to a written questionnaire. I ritually displaced Andy Warhol's images on the table and in the kitchen. As napkins near the plates, I positioned the brochures of the ICASA symposium, to be read during the eating performance. At the end, statistically, the questionnaires reported that the majority of us believed of "eating" Andy Warhol during the performance. That night Andy Warhol died. We felt very shocked about. During *The Dematerialization of Art* conference, it was posed the question to Nam Jun Paik, one of the speakers if it was possible to think that we ate Andy Warhol. Paik confirmed that he believed that we "dematerialized" Warhol in our intentional act of eating his commodity art symbol.

At the end of June, in Rome, with a serpentine happening procession, from my house at Piazza San Giovanni della Malva, with the participation of more than 50 artists, we performed in the streets of Trastevere a recall visit to the place where in 1979 it was held the L.I.A.C.A. cultural slave market show. The next day, at the Teatro in Trastevere, we presented in a press conference the program of *Il Serpente di Pietra* as the first international art slave market show in contemporary art history.

Figure 23

Plexus Voyage



From Rome to Gavoi, Sardinia, 1987, photo by Laura Squarcia.

Il Serpente di Pietra was staged as four days of art and science the following week at the Stone Age sanctuary of Sa Itria, in Gavoi, Sardinia. From July 1 to July 4 1987, in Gavoi, in the middle of the Sardinia Island, 160 artists of 23 different nationalities as an answer to the art slaves call sent out from New York in 1986, they worked and lived together in the megalithic sanctuary of Sa Itria, creating the Plexus artcoopera *Il Serpente di Pietra* (the Serpent of Stone), within a collaborative art environment (all artists names are reported in Appendix C). It was organized by the City of Gavoi with Mariangela Sedda, president of Plexus Il Serpente di Pietra, a new non profit association established in Cagliari. Franco Meloni managed the experimental computer connection, through Bitnet academic computer network, between the University of Cagliari and Bruce Breland of the Dax Group at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh to exchanges digital art works by artists in Kassel, Sidney, Montreal, Wien, Wales, New York and in other places around the world.

Figure 24

Il Serpente di Pietra



Gavoi, Sardinia, 1987, photo by Stefano Grassi.

Figure 25

Il Serpente di Pietra



Gavoi, Sardinia, 1987, photo by A. Lindsay; poster by Stefano Asili, Cagliari, 1987.

As a closing act, I burned my clothes with Assane M'Baye, the representative of the Dakar artists, as a symbolic burning of my image as Plexus artistic director.

Figure 26

The End of the Artistic Director in Plexus



Sandro Dernini, Assane M'Baye, Arturo Lindsay, Sardinia, 1987, photo by Stefano Grassi.

After Gavoi, I went with Willem Brugman to Carloforte, in the island of San Pietro, where I brought my green Nuraghic statuette, with other relics from *Il Serpente di Pietra*, on board of the Elisabeth, to be placed next to the Don Cherry's little Buddha statuette, together with other records and relics from past Plexus events.

In the fall, in Cagliari, thanks to the artworks by Gaetano Brundu, Antonello Dessi, Luigi Mazzarelli, and Anna Saba, which offered as exchange to the printer Franco Girina, an art collector, to have published by Edizioni Celt the first Plexus booklet, named *Passport for Plexus Serpent*.

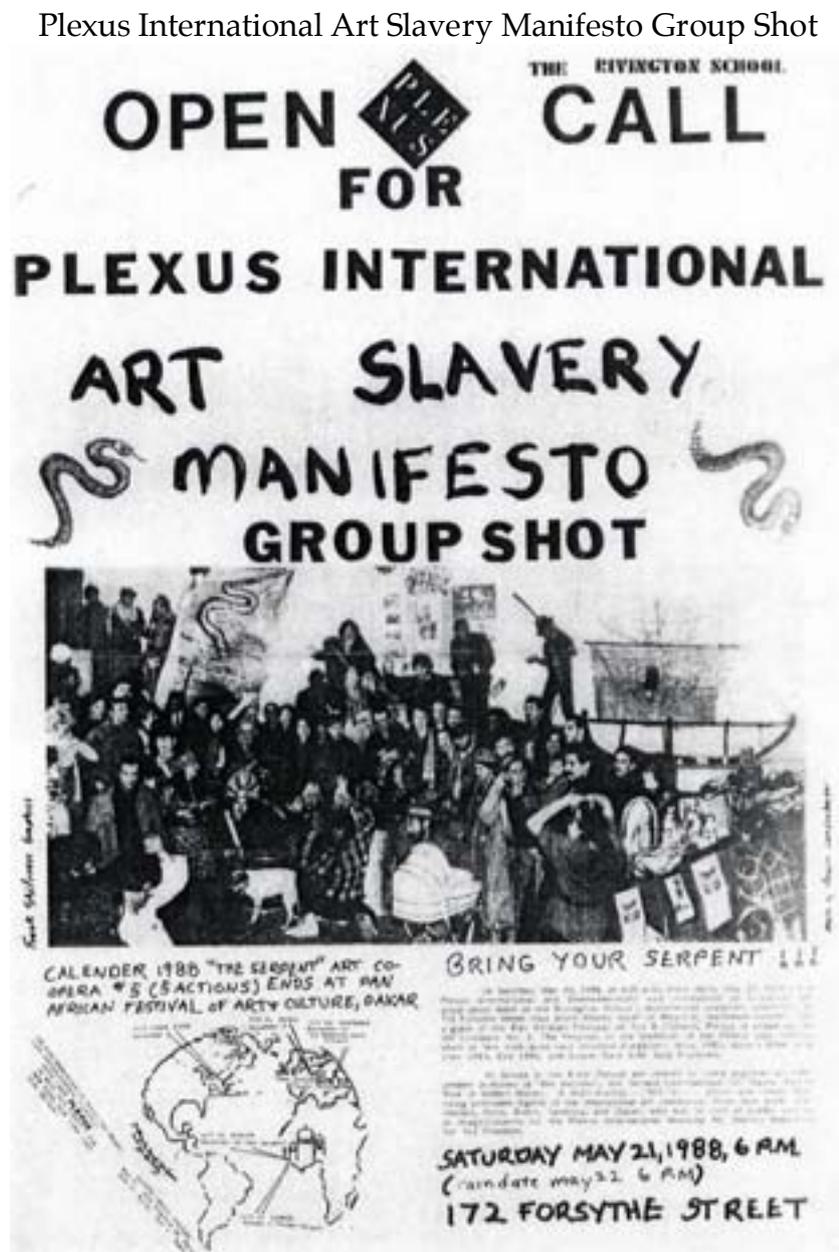
In December, in Dakar, at the Auditorium INSEPS, in a public debate with Assane M'Baye, Youssouph Traore and Pathe Diop, we discussed the Plexus project proposal to organize in December 1988 the arrival of the art slave boat to the House of the Slaves, in Goree.

On February 20 1988, at CUAN.DO, in New York, I organized a report to the Lower East Side community of the last Plexus news from Rome, Sardinia, Amsterdam, and Dakar. By sending out the provocative claiming of "*the money of art belongs to the artists*," I staged it in the dry swimming pool as a performance happening *The Redefinition of an Andy Warhol Campbell Soup Can*, on the occasion of the anniversary of the dematerialization event of Andy Warhol. This time, I performed with Barnaby Ruhe and Frank Shifreen the artistic transformation of two boxes of Campbell Soup cans into two boxes of Plexus cans, by gluing a red penny on top of each can and printing with a rubber stamp the Plexus name on each can. My performance was inspired to the ICASA symposium *The Redefinition of Art in the Collision of Cultures in the Post-Modern World*, held in the same period at the New York University, in which I was involved as graduate assistant. The happening was opened by Lorenzo Pace performing his shaman's return from Sardinia together with Tony Noughera and his Loisada Samba band and Sidney Silva, by being then joined by Leonard Horowitz as the Marlboro, Lynne Kanter, as Marilyn Monroe, Anita Steckel with her flying woman, Helen Valentin with her red serpent flag, David Boyle, Luca

Pizzorno, and Wess Power, all recorded by Giuseppe Sacchi for a future Snub TV show to be produced by Fran Duffy.

On May 21, at Rivington School, in New York, we staged *Plexus International Art Slavery Manifesto Group Shot*, with Ivan Dalla Tana taking our first historical photo. The Rivington School was a radical art urban project, built as a workshop of metal sculptors in an empty ruined parking lot, founded by Ray Kelly and inspired to Bucky Fuller's synergetics.

Figure 27



Rivington School, New York, May 21, 1988, graphic by Frank Shifreen.

Figure 28

Plexus Group Shot Against Art Slavery, New York.



Rivington School, New York, 1988, photo by Ivan Dalla Tana.

Figure 29

Plexus Group Shot Against Art Slavery, Rome.



Metateatro, Rome, 1988, photo by Adriano Mordenti.

On June 15, at the Metateatro in Rome, a group of historical participants of the Italian performing avant-garde related to the L.I.A.C.A.'s time gathered together for the *Plexus International Art Slavery Manifesto Group Shot*. For this occasion, Fabrizio Bertuccioli printed an Italian edition of the Open Call of Plexus International for the Slaves of Art, that he re-elaborated as an artist in the first person statement. This second group shot was taken by Adriano Mordenti, in front of a large copy of the New York photo. It was opened by Paolo Buggiani performing the arrival from New York of his *Minotaur* in fire, then I staged a collective artistic transformation of two boxes of Campbell Soup cans into Plexus cans by gluing ten lire coins, painted in white, on top of each can, and individually signed by the participating artists.

On June 18, on board of Elisabeth, in Carloforte, Sardinia, on the occasion of the third group shot, Luigi Mazzarelli, Stefano Grassi, Maria Grazia Medda, Anna Saba, Randi Hansen, Gabriella Locci, Antonello Dessi, Andrea Portas, Antonio Caboni, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Armando Soldaini, Franco Meloni, and Sandro Dernini dressed the Elisabeth boat as new symbolic Plexus art slave ship.

Figure 30

Plexus Group Shot Against Art Slavery, Sardinia



On board the Elisabeth, Carloforte, 1988, photo by the researcher.

The day after, in Cagliari, Gaetano Brundu transformed a toy boat into a Plexus messenger of art freedom to allow Plexus to escape from local art constrictions. On its sheet sail, Brundu painted his *moustache* sign, associated since early 80's to the immunological messenger Interleukine Two. Few day later, always in Cagliari, Luigi Mazzarelli gave me to bring in Dakar two large art mail envelopes, a meter by a half meter. Inside, he handwrote two messages, one addressed to the Senegal artists and the second one to me, in which he challenged many critical current issues in contemporary art. In the end of June, inside the Colosseum of Rome, on the occasion of a new photo group shot, Micaela Serino distributed, free of charge, a large amount of her 1000 lire bills as new *Plexus Art Money*.

Figure 31

Made in the 80s for the 90s



Art Altar by Sandro Dernini, Mago d'Oz, Rome, 1988, photo by the researcher.

On July 4, in Rome, at Il Mago d'Oz, an historical site of L.I.A.C.A. managed by Giovanna Ducrot, on the occasion of the anniversary of the 1987 Plexus Art Slaves Market event, I carried an old family wood cylinder box full of Plexus and L.I.A.C.A. relics and records, on which Fabrizio Bertuccioli and Roberto Federici painted the words *Fatti negli 80's per i 90's* (Made in the 80's for the 90's). Massimo Sarchielli, who was in 1981 the first artist that I presented in the NYU program *The Artist in the First Person*, opened the cylinder box. Then, I deconstructed its contents and presented a prototype of my *Plexus Campbell's Soup Can*, filled with new Plexus Art Money made by Micaela Serino. Few days after, in the garden of Gianni Villella, in Rome, a statuette buried there in 1987 by Arturo Lindsay leaving for Sardinia, was retrieved as a collective ritual art performance.

In August, in Dakar, with Langouste M'Bow and Assane M'Baye, we went to the mosque of Touba to meet Serin Karim M'Backe, a religious chief, to ask permission to perform the sacred image of Prophet Cheik Amoudou Bamba, within the Plexus event planned in Goree.

Figure 32

From La Medina to Goree Island, Dakar



On the ferry boat, Goree, Dakar 1988

On August 26, Plexus through a serpentine parade of hundreds participants, directed by Omar Seck, performing the exile from Senegal to Gabon of Cheik Amoudou Bamba, from the streets of La Medina to the island of Goree, arrived to the House of the Slaves in Goree. At the end, I presented *Plexus International Open Call Against Art Slavery Manifesto* to the Mayor's representative to promote the opening of a World Art Bank in Goree, against any kind of slavery. A large group photo shot on the stairs of the Door of No Return of the House of the Slaves ended Plexus event.

Figure 33

House of the Slaves Group Shot Against Art Slavery, Goree



House of the Slaves, Goree, Dakar, 1988.

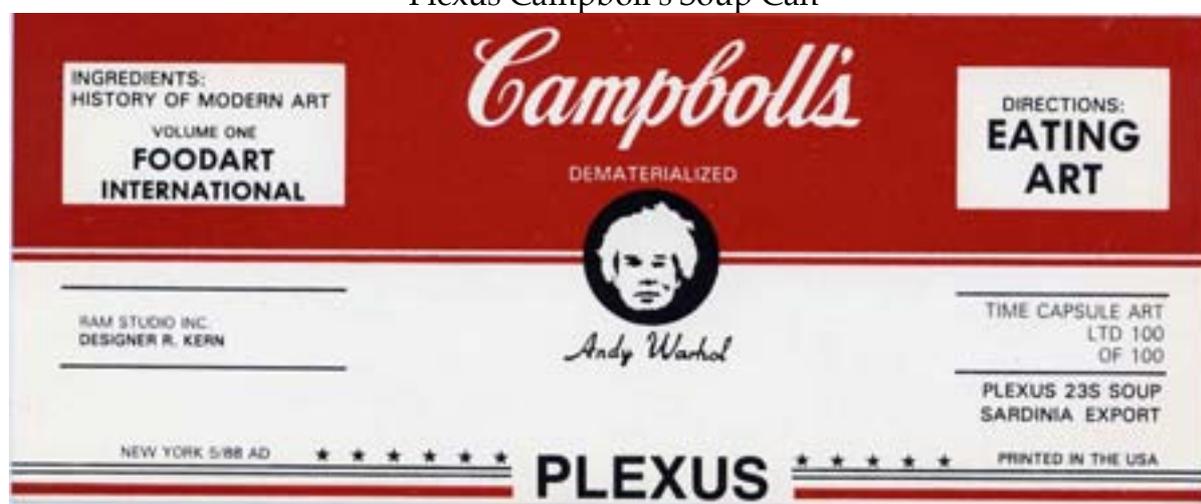
Few days after, at the Club Litteraire David Diop, in the Medina of Dakar, with Youssouph Traorè, Langouste MBow, Assane MBaye, Zulu MBaye, Tairo Diop, we wrote an *Open Letter to All Artists of the World*, fully reported in Appendix B.

Plexus International launches a call for all artists of the world to come to Dakar, from December 23, 1988, to January 3, 1989, to contribute to the opening of a credit line in favour of the International Art Community through the creation of an Art World Bank.

From May to August of 1988, from New York to Rome, Sardinia and Dakar, through the Plexus Open Calls more than 300-400 artists gathered together in support of Plexus project to open in Goree Island a World Art Bank, produced by the artists in the first person as independent producers.

In New York, on September 23, for my birthday party in Soho, at the loft of Carmen Miraglia, I created an art altar made with records and relics from Plexus voyage to present my first limited edition of labels of *Plexus Campbell's Soup Can*. When I conceived this Plexus artwork I asked Maggie Reilly of Ram Studio to realize it, under my instruction. Robert Kern designed the label, with the little fine difference, instead of "Campbell's," with the same character is written "*Campbell's*." Above it, "*Dematerialized*" is written on top of an Andy Warhol's image and his signature, and at its bottom the name "*PLEXUS*." On the top left side, "*Ingredients: History of Modern Art, Volume One, FoodArt International;*" on the other top right side, "*Direction: Eating Art.*"

Figure 34
Plexus Campbell's Soup Can



Artwork concept by Sandro Dernini, graphics by Ram Studio, New York 1988.

On the back of my art altar, I placed the boxing ring poster from the Art Slavery group shot event held in Rome and I placed at its center a photo of the House of the Slaves of Goree. At the altar's bottom, I placed a poster from the Whitney Museum show *Made in the Sixties* and *Plexus International Art Slavery Manifesto Group Shot*.

In October, on the wall of the burned building of The Shuttle Theatre, at 523 East 6 Street, I exposed a large selection of photos documenting the voyage of Plexus in Italy and in Senegal as an open report to the Lower East Side Community, to raise a broader community support for the continuation of Plexus event.

On November 3, at CUANDO, Plexus presented *Purgatorio Show 1988*, as first act of *The Serpent*, an international travelling event, staged in five acts, in five different cities, New York, Carloforte, Cagliari, Dakar, Goree.

Figure 35

Purgatorio Shows '88



CUANDO, New York, 1988.

The Serpent was staged At CUANDO, the first act *Purgatorio Show '88* was performed by David Boyle and the Shock Theatre Group, Stephen DiLauro, Lynne Kanter, Arturo Lindsay, Lorenzo Pace, Miguel Algarin, Andrea Grassi, Jose Rodriguez, Nilda Cortez, Wes Power, Loisada Samba Band, Sara Jackson and others. A limited edition of Plexus Purgatorio Shows '88 T-shirts was made by David Boyle and Joanee Freedom. The little art toy boat was used as a container of Plexus Serpent pins made by Mitch Ross to be given away, free of charge, to the audience as

made in the 80s for the 90s. At the end Lenny Horowitz performed the Marlboro Man as a recall of the art slaves ship's departure from the artopera *Eve, Purgatorio Show* '86.

Figure 36

Marlboro Man



Leonard Horowitz, CUANDO, New York, 1988, photo by Lynne Kanter.

On November 11, at the Snow Ben Room of Bobst Library of New York University, as a second act, it was staged *Il Viaggio del Serpente*, an International interactive Italian evening of art, music, poetry and technology, presented by the NYU Music Dept., the NYU Art and Art Education Dept. and the Italian Institute of Culture. It featured an art show by Marina Cappelletto, Antonia Carmi, Franco Ciarlo, Dionigi Cossu, Ivan Dalla Casa, Baldo Diodato, Cosino Di Leo Ricatto, Roberto Fabricciani, Manuela Filiaci, Dinu Ghezze, Andrea Grassi, Gianfranco Mantegna, Renato Miceli, Beatrice Muzi, Luca Pizzorno, Renzo Ricchi, Elisabetta Zanelli. As a happening, Plexus artists performed a serpentine ritual procession following as an imaginary Serpent route going to Sardinia and to Dakar. Dinu Ghezze orchestrated with a chorus an improvisation by phone interacting with Franco Meloni at the University of Cagliari. Wearing an anti-gas, I presented the Serpent travelling program from New York to Sardinia and Dakar, by pointing on

a computer monitor an experimental software program *Columbus Business Plan*. George Chaikin exchange art images via fax with Franco Meloni at the University of Cagliari, and with Bruce Breland at the Carnegie Mellon in Pittsburgh. Ivan Dalla Tana exposed his *Nuclear Serpent*, with on its back three enlargements of the group shot made at the House of the Slaves in Goree.

Figure 37

Il Viaggio del Serpente



Artwork by Ivan Dalla Tana, New York, 1988.

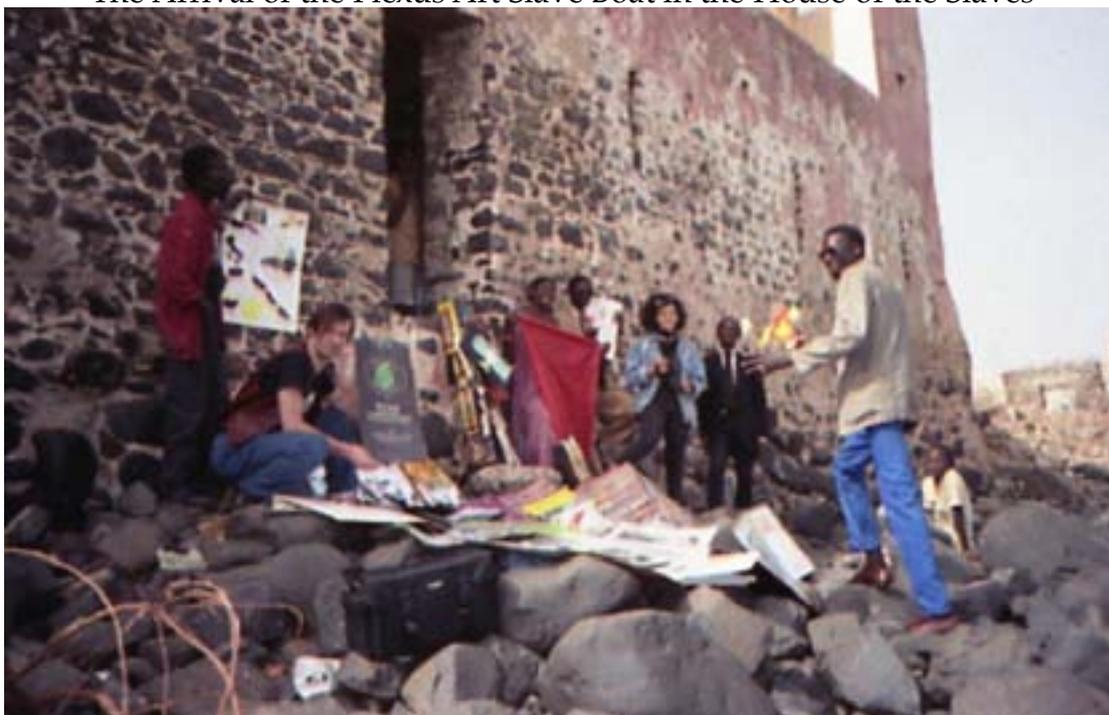
On November 14, in Carloforte, in Sardinia, for the occasion of the celebrations of La Madonna dello Schiavo, it was staged the third act of *The Serpent* on board of the Elisabeth with the captain Carlo Dernini and his crew wearing the Plexus Purgatorio Show '88 T-shirts, we performed a symbolic departure of the Elisabeth toward Dakar. In December, at Annetta Ducrot's, in Rome, I organized a series of dinner parties in via del Corallo to spread out the last news on Plexus art slave journey and to create opportunities to make new photos of Plexus participants, in front of antecedent photos, while appointing themselves in these pictures.

In Cagliari, the fourth act *Tradition and Modernity* was staged in the mid of December by Tommaso Meloni and Antonio Caboni. It featured the departure of the little art toy boat, carrying symbolically a large lot of works of art by Sardinian

artists in support of the Goree project. Few days later, Andrea Portas painted on a side board of the little art toy boat, the word *Liberte de l'Art*, and on the other side *Ningki-Nangka*. On a side of the sail, he placed the *Africa Project Against Apartheid* logo made by Silvio Betti, next to two black and white shaking hands, with Nelson Mandela's image.

Figure 38

The Arrival of the Plexus Art Slave Boat in the House of the Slaves



Assane MBaye, Langouste MBow, Willem Brugman, Awa MBaye, Valeria Meloni, Youssouph Traorè, House of the Slaves, Goree, Dakar, 1989, photo by the researcher.

On first January 1989, at the House of the Slaves in Goree, Dakar, with Willem Brugman, Franco and Valeria Meloni, Assane and Awa MBaye, Langouste MBow, and Youssouph Traore, we performed the final fifth act as a happening. Assane MBaye, coming from the rocks at the ocean side, where slaves used to be deported in the direction of the Americas, performed the arrival of the little toy boat *Libertè de l'Art* directed to the House of the Slaves. On the rocks, in front of the entrance of the Door of No Return, it was made an art altar installation with a group of Nuraghic statuettes, the ancestral messenger statuette of Arturo Lindsay retrieved in Rome, and the art works by Luigi Mazzarelli, Gaetano Brundu, Kre MBaye, Langouste

MBow, Ivan dalla Tana, Micaela Serino, Anna Saba, Andrea Portas, Annamaria Caracciolo, Gabriella Locci, Nazzareno Miconi, Antonio Caboni, Anna Piccioni, collected in support to the Plexus project for the opening in Goree of the World Art Bank. Before crossing the *Door of No Return*, Awa MBaye burned ritually some incenses in her family pot placed at the bottom of the Door. Langouste MBow moved all artworks through the Door, then, one by one, we crossed also the Door to present the Plexus International project to Joseph NDiaye, the curator of the House of the Slaves. After, we went to the ANAST Cumba Castel, an art studio - gallery of a friend of Micaela Serino and of Assane MBaye, where we buried the Ancestral Messenger statuette of Arturo Lindsay. On top of it, on the ground, it was placed the *Trojan Horse*, a wood sculpture made by Kre MBaye, in which I hid a Barnaby Ruhe's boomerang. The next day, in front of the entrance of the House of the Slaves, Willem Brugman, Anna Piccioni, and Zulu MBaye, president of A.N.A.P.S. (National Association of Plastiques Artists of Senegal), performed the reading of the *Plexus Open Letter to All Artists of the World*.

The week after, at Joe Ouakam's Agit Art space, in Dakar, I made with Langouste MBow an art installation focused on the economic-political art control by the artworld of the Western market. There, I presented to the press and to the Minister Aliasse Ba the Plexus International project, calling for attention on the last art market reports, placed at the center of the art installation, from the Sotheby's art auctions held in New York in November 1988. I recalled the difficult life of Van Gogh when he was alive as an example of the historic struggle of all artists, underlining the controversial value of the 53.9 millions dollars paid for the Van Gogh's painting *Irises*. I stressed that about this controversial auction some rumours were circulating in New York about a substantial "*under the table*" loan from the same auction house to the buyer of the Van Gogh's painting. Within this historical and controversial context, I reported the history of Plexus art slave boat journey escaped from the New York Artworld control to open a World Art Bank in Goree, for the survival of all artists of the world. I stated that Goree was, is, and will be for ever, a universal

symbol of human rights, recalling to all of us the human trade market. I argued that behind any work of art, traded as just as a commodity, there is a human being the artist that is traded as a slave.

Figure 39

Plexus 23s Presentation to the Senegal Minister



Minister Aliasse Ba, Sandro Dernini, Youssouph Traorè, Agit Art Atelier, Dakar, 1989.

Therefore, I claimed the need of the negotiation of a new art contract to defend the rights of the artists.

In the end of January, in New York, I discovered in the Bobst Library of New York University, reading the book *The Life of Christopher Columbus* written by his son Ferdinando, the controversial story of “a change of route” made by Columbus in his early experiences as captain on board of his ship in front of the Island of San Pietro, off of Sardinia, where the Elisabeth boat was waiting to depart in the direction of the House of the Slaves in the island of Goree, Senegal. Then, I presented to the NYU Assistant Dean of the SEHNAP School, James Finkelstein, a proposal to develop a cultural navigation art event for the 1992 Columbus 500 year anniversary. After his approval, I started to contact some potential participants. On March 10, at the Anderson Room of New York University, it was held a meeting of a group of

academic institutions and cultural associations. It was chaired by Dean James Finkelstein and hosted by John V. Gilbert, chairman of the NYU Music Dept. It was attended by Bruce Breland and Jenny Bell of the Carnegie Mellon Dax Group, George Chaikin of Cooper Union, Angiola Churchill and David Ecker of the NYU Art & Art Education Dept., Malvern Lumsden of NYU SEHNAP Publishing Studio, Earl S. Davis of NYU Institute for Afro-American Affairs, Nilda Cortez and Josè Rodriguez of C.U.A.N.D.O. Cultural Community Centre, Mor Thiam and Camall Cisse of the Institute for Study of African Culture, Mico Licastro of the Institute for the Italian American Experience, Arturo Lindsay of Plexus International Art Urban Forum Inc. and Okechukwu Odita of the Art History Dept. of Ohio State University. At the end, it was established The 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium, with the purpose to rethink about Columbus' landing in the Americas by developing a variety of projects of voyages of contemporary cultural navigation into the "new world" which was understood to be the living planet and its living traditions. I was designated as the coordinator of the Consortium.

The same day, in the evening at CUANDO, we organized a performance report informing the Community at large about the establishment of the Columbus Consortium and how it was possible to participate in it. The community report event was made by Nilda Cortez, Okechukwu Odita, and me with Joanee Freedom. Arturo Lindsay as opening act staged with me and Juma Santos his ritual performance *Andy's Aura*, dedicated to Mickey Pinero, died recently. The memorial ended with a poetry reading by Mickey's father and Miguel Algarin, followed by a presentation of *Plexus compressionism* by Lenny Horowitz.

In April, after a second Consortium meeting at NYU, it was presented at the Rivington School an other performance report to the Community from the Consortium. It was staged as a Plexus happening, named *The Art World TV Deconstruction/Reconstruction, Episode Two: The Rivington School*, made with the participation of Okechukwu Odita, Lenny Horowitz, Arturo Lindsay, Maggie Reilly, Ray Kelly and me. In May, because of problems inerent the NYU institutional

participation in the Columbus Consortium as well as about the concern raised by Arturo Lindsay on the Plexus participation in the 1992 Columbus Consortium, it was agreed to stop Plexus international activities.

On the end of May, at the Institute of Computer Art of the School of Visual Arts, I organized with George Chaikin and Stephen DiLauro the event *1992: The Departure of An Art Human Shuttle For Freedom Journeying to the Realm of a New Planet Called Tim-Art*, in which we not mentioned Plexus name. David Boyle with his Shock Troupe Theatre Group, Lenny Horowitz and Wess Power, staged a theatrical departure while George Chaikin performed with a scanner camera the “dematerialization” of a small copy of a canoe from Senegal to be transferred via computer to Franco Meloni at the University of Cagliari, with no success. Therefore, he transferred these data into two computer disks.

Figure 40

The Departure of *Plexus Black Box*



Willem Brugman, Sara Jackson, David Boyle, Stephen DiLauro, Antonio Caboni, Franco Meloni, Sandro Dernini, Dept. of Physics, University of Cagliari, 1989.

In the end of June, at the Department of Physics of the University of Cagliari, within an improvised performance by Tanya Gerstle, David Boyle, Willem Brugman, Stephen DiLauro, Sara Jackson, Antonio Caboni, holding the antecedent photos of the New York departure, I delivered George Chaikin's computer disks to Franco Meloni in order to "re-materialize" the canoe.

After several discussions in Rome, in Cagliari and in Carloforte, with David Boyle, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Paolo Maltese, Willem Brugman, Maria Pia Marsala, Stephen DiLauro, Sara Jackson, Gaetano Brundu and Franco Meloni, how to solve Plexus problems, exploded with its participation in the Columbus Consortium, we decided to "freeze" metaphorically Plexus into a "black box," in order to avoid its historical collapse, until when a larger consensus was again gained and a strategy was defined for its survival and historical advancement.

Figure 41

Open the Door of Your Heart to Go into the Future



Art work by Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Metateatro, Rome, 1989

On July 1, at the Metateatro, in Rome, *Plexus Black Box* was presented within 1992 *Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte*, an artopera performed by David Boyle,

Willem Brugman, Stephen DiLauro, Sara Jackson, Tanya Gerstle, Antonio Caboni, Giancarlo Schiaffini, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Maria Pia Marsala, Micaela Serino, and Annetta Ducrot. At the end, I walked on the stage with the box *Made in the 80s for the 90s*, full of Plexus relics and records, as a symbolic *Plexus Black Box*, and I invited the audience to sign a large poster named *Plexus Boxing Ring for Freedom*. Then, all participants walked out through a door installation *Open the Door of Your Heart to Go into the Future* made by Fabrizio Bertuccioli.

On July 4, at the University of Cagliari, the *Open Call Plexus Black Box* was issued by Franco Meloni to bring ideas as contributions for a general discussion on an actual definition of what PLEXUS has been, what it should be, and what it could be, to be analyzed by an international board of referees.

In the beginning of January 1990, prof. David Ecker, member of the 1992 Columbus Consortium, chairman of my Ph.D. dissertation committee at the New York University and director of I.S.A.L.T.A., came in Rome to visit me. We went to the University of Rome "La Sapienza" to present to prof. Carlo De Marco, dean of the School of Medicine and my former professor when I was there a biochemist researcher in the '70s, to present the 1992 Columbus Consortium. Together, we conceived a cultural navigation project to organize in 1992 an international Columbus conference, addressing the academy and the community on the issue of the well-being in the XXIst Century. Dean De Marco foresaw the possibility to associate this theme to the development of a new integrated vision of human well being, as recommended by the World Health Organization. He gave to me the book "*Toward the Well-Being of Humankind*" by Robert Shaplen, promoted by the Rockefeller Foundation, and suggested to use the *well being* concept for the development of an international cross-disciplinary conference to be organized in 1992 in the Island of San Pietro in Sardinia. Then, he proposed to host in the summer a preliminary working group session at the University of Rome "La Sapienza" to check the feasibility of this proposal.

The day after, in Sardinia, at the Physics Dept of the University of Cagliari, with Franco Meloni we discussed how to activate the participation of the University of Cagliari in the organization of the 1992 Columbus event.

David Ecker in New York presented *The Voyage of the Elisabeth*, as a collaborative travelling art project made in collaboration by I.S.A.L.T.A. and Plexus International to promote the establishment of an International Art Fund in the island of Goree, Dakar, in order to survive the masters of the living traditions in art of all cultures.

In February, at the Metateatro, in Rome, in an event, called *1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte, Parte II*, organized by Loreto Papadia, with Glauco Benigni, Giuseppe Salerno, Francesco Franci, Stelio Fiorenza, Enzo Ciarravano, I presented the *Italian Telematic Team* as an experimental cultural navigation toward the 1992 Columbus event. It was concluded by a performance of Ciro Ciriaco and the symbolic transmission to the island of San Pietro of a long fax with the images of hundred faces of artists participants as members of the *Telematic Team*. After few days, at the Calcata Carnival, with Maria Pia Marsala, Micaela Serino, Loreto Papadia, we performed *Columbus Voyage: Made in the Eighties for the 92*.

Figure 42

Plexus Black Box Carnival



Maria Pia Marsala, Sandro Dernini, Micaela Serino, Loreto Papadia, Calcata, 1990.

In May, in Amsterdam, Willem Brugman and Frans Evers started to deconstruct the *Plexus Black Box*.

Figure 43

Plexus Black Box



Amsterdam, 1990, photo by R. Jansen

Then, in Rome, I performed with Maria Pia Marsala the dematerialization of the Amsterdam's records, into the *Plexus Black Box* for travelling to Sardinia. There, at Gaetano Brundu's studio in Cagliari, I performed the arrival of a new little toy boat as a Plexus art messenger, carrying the last news of "Plexus Black Box." With Andrea Portas and Daniela Fantini it was performed the departure of a large artwork *Il Sudario* that Brundu made as the sail of the Elisabeth. At the Archeological Villanovaforru Museum, I staged with Ubaldo Badas a symbolical arrival of the *Plexus Black Box* and the discovery of Nuraghic archaeological contemporary art fragments of the Plexus history.

On June 30, at the Ridotto del Colosseo, in Rome with Maria Pia Marsala and Giancarlo Schiaffini, I organized the Plexus event 1992 *Cristoforo Colombo, Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte, part III: Plexus Black Box*. We staged it as a three days laboratory to

deconstruct collectively the *Plexus Black Box* together with David Ecker, Arturo Lindsay, Okechukwu Odita, Willem Brugman, Frans Evers, Lynne Kanter, Frank Shifreen, Antonello Dessi, Antonio Caboni, Adrea Portas, Karl Geringer, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Micaela Serino, Roberto Federici, Ciro Ciriaco, Piero Cianflone, Carlo Cusatelli, Anna Piccioni, Mauro Brusa, Vittorio Terracina, and Fabi Bandini.

Few days later, we presented to Mons. Dante Balboni, director of the High Institute of Sacred Art of the Vatican, the Christopher Columbus Consortium project and the Plexus reconciliation art efforts of bridging the House of the Slaves in Goree Island with the church *The Madonna of the Slave* in Carloforte, in San Pietro Island, on the occasion of the 1992 Columbus event. After, the Plexus project was presented to the Ambassador of Senegal in Italy, S.E. Youssouph Baro, together with the proposal of the opening in Goree of a World Art Bank. In the evening, at the Metateatro, it was held the round table *Plexus Black Box: A Multicultural Data Bank for a Caravella dell'Arte* with the participation of Arturo Lindsay, David Ecker, Odita Okechukwu, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Frans Evers, Ciro Ciriaco, and Frank Shifreen.

Figure 44

The Voyage of the Elisabeth



Carloforte, San Pietro Island, Sardinia, 1990.

On July 4, at the City Hall of Carloforte, with David Ecker, Odita Okechukwu, I presented the proposal to organize there the Columbus Reconciliation Well Being Forum, to be held on October 1992. On board the Elisabeth, we presented *Elisabeth, La Caravella dell'Arte*, a travelling art project sustaining the opening in Goree of the World Art Fund in order to survive the masters of the living traditions in art from all cultures, under the risk of extinction. Few days after, at the Archaeological Museum of Villanovaforru, Cagliari, David Ecker presented an ISALTA proposal for a *Plexus Black Box* data bank project to catalogue and retrieve information regarding the masters of Sardinian living traditions in art.

On the end of December, at Teatro in Trastevere, in Rome, as a closing performing act of the original time frame for my Ph.D. inquiry on *Plexus Black Box*, originally delimited to 1990, I performed with Maria Pia Marsala, Giancarlo Schiaffini, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Stelio Fiorenza, Micaela Serino, Mauro Brusà and others, the presentation of the *Plexus Black Box* to Mons. Dante Balboni.

Figure 45

The Symbolic Delivery of *Plexus Black Box* to the Vatican



R. Mitraglia, E.Rizzi, Micaela Serino, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Lidia Biondi, Mauro Brusà, Maria Pia Marsala, Dante Balboni, Sandro Dernini, Stelio Fiorenza, Giancarlo Schiaffini, A. Abbondanza, Simone, Franco Nuzzo, Teatro in Trastevere, Rome, 1990, photo G. De Marco.

On July 4 1991, at the City Hall of Carloforte, Columbus Consortium Italian Committee, made by Saverio Avveduto, Vincenzo Cappelletti, Giovanni Lilliu, Carlo De Marco, Mario Giacotti, presented to the Mayor the proposal to organize there, in 1992, an International conference for the 500 years of Columbus's landing in the Americas on the theme of "The Well Being in the XXI Century."

After, in the harbour, on board the Elisabeth boat, Plexus performed the presentation of its proposal to have a Columbus Reconciliation event made by a fleet of art projects, on the occasion of the Columbus Well Being International conference. This proposal together with the Mayor's agreement letter to the 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium was placed into a small wood black box and placed on board the floating sculpture by Ciro Ciriaco, representing Plexus *Black Box*, and then it was anchored in the middle of harbour.

Figure 46

Plexus Presentation to the 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium



B. L. Petretto, N. Campanini, Mario Giacotti, Saverio Avveduto, Vincenzo Cappelletti, Maria P. Marsala, Giovanni Lilliu, Carlo De Marco, Nadia Guareschi, Carloforte, 1991.

Figure 47

A Floating *Plexus Black Box*

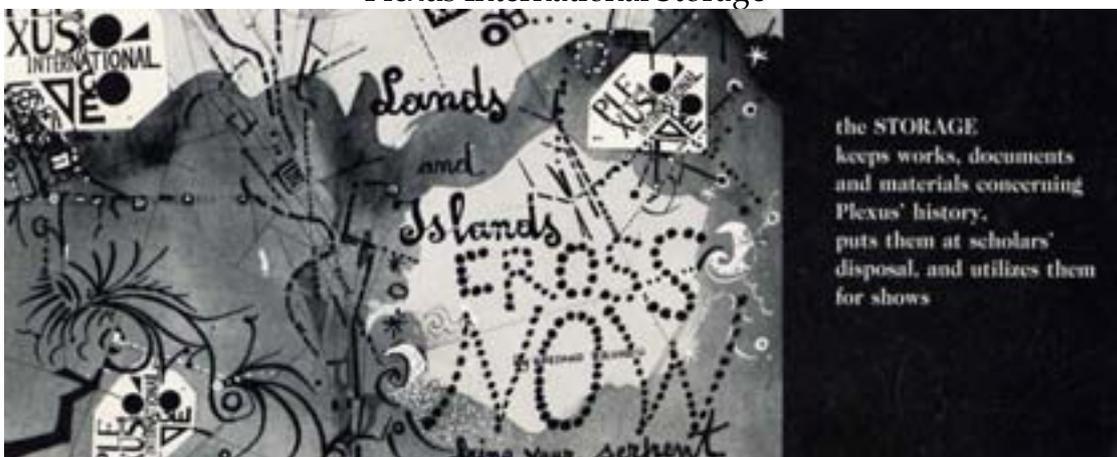


Ciro Ciriaco on board on his floating artwork, Carloforte, 1991.

As closing performance, the little toy boat *Colombina* made by Silvio Betti, as an art messenger of reconciliation and well-being, was carried into the sky by a colourful kite made by Guido Pegna. In the fall, at the harbour of Carloforte, the floating sculpture was recovered and the small wood box, representing *Plexus Black Box*, was placed on board the Elisabeth with all others Plexus relics and records. On November, in Cagliari, Gaetano Brundu opened the *Plexus International Storage* with an installation of Plexus relics brought by us from the Elisabeth's collection.

Figure 48

Plexus International Storage



Artwork by Gaetano Brundu, Cagliari, 1991.

On October 1992, in Carloforte, it was held the international Columbus Reconciliation Forum focused on the theme of "The Well Being in the XXI Century." David W. Ecker presented the 1992 Columbus Consortium and expressed the ISALTA concern about the world survival of the living traditions in art. George Chaikin and Franco Meloni presented a cultural navigation proposal to connect Goree Island in Senegal and San Pietro in Sardinia through a network of international academic institutions. Jose Rodriguez, Rolando Politi, Patricia Nicholson Parker and Nilda Cortez raised the attention on the need, within a new "well being" paradigm, to support community-based efforts toward a reconciliation. Lorenzo Pace carried the *Colombina* toy boat, retrieved from an old Sardinian aristocratic family, and, by recalling the slavery history of his family, introduced the Plexus proposal of the opening in Goree of a World Art Bank.

Figure 49

Colombina



Lorenzo Pace, Cagliari, 1992, photo by Georgetta Stonefish.

Okechukwu Odita by addressing his presentation to Mockar MBow, chairperson of the Goree Memorial Foundation, pointed out how the Plexus Art World Bank proposal had to be considered as a contribution of cooperation for reconciliation. As

final document of the Forum, it was issued *The Columbus Open Call of Carloforte for Reconciliation*, reported in the Appendix B. In the evening, it was held the music performance *Route Correction: The Voyage of the Elisabeth* by Giancarlo Schiaffini, with an art installation made by Gabriella Locci around the stage and, at the entrance, a *Plexus Black Box* art show by Maria Grazia Medda inspired to George Chaikin's *Hadamard Matrix* drawing.

The next day, in Cagliari, at the Plexus International Storage, within the setting of the art installation *Multiplex of Black* by Antonello Dessi, Lorenzo Pace, and Patricia Parker performed the continuation of Plexus art journey, while George Chaikin carried with me his *Hadamard Matrix* drawing around the space and looking the audience through it as a symbolic mapping of Plexus voyage.

On December 10, at the City Hall of New York, on the occasion of the Human Rights Day, the Commissioner of Human Rights Dennis de Leon organized a round table with Mico Licatro, David Ecker, George Chaikin, Jose Rodriguez, Ralph Lerner, Earl S. Davis, Okechukwu Odita, and I, to discuss the continuation of the Columbus Reconciliation Well Being project started in Sardinia.

In the evening, at the NYU Barney Building Auditorium, I managed a performance report *The Deconstruction of "The Voyage of the Elisabeth," The Serpent, in Order to Survive*, to bring back immediately to the Lower East Side community the results from the round table held at the City Hall as well as the last news from The Christopher Columbus Consortium's event held in Sardinia. To avoid any potential institutional problems, it was staged as a session of the NYU David Ecker's aesthetic inquiry course, with contributions made by William Parker, Patricia Nicholson Parker, Lorenzo Pace, Alfa Diallo, Jose Rodriguez, George Chaikin, Barnaby Ruhe, Okechukwu Odita, Nilda Cortez, and I.

Few days after, the Mayor of the City of New York, after been informed by the Commissioner de Leon and Mico Licastro about the international process of reconciliation and well being turned on by the Columbus Reconciliation Forum held

in Sardinia, declared in New York City the day of December 16 as *International Reconciliation Day*.

In the spring of 1993, at the office of the commissioner Dennis de Leon, it was established The International Reconciliation and Well Being Committee. Around the same period, I presented the project *The Voyage of the Elisabeth*, as part of a community-based art education program "Cultural Navigation and Community: Art, Reconciliation and Well-Being," organized by to the Graduate Summer Institute of Living Traditions in Art of New York University, in which I served as coordinator.

In October, from Cagliari, on the occasion of the first anniversary of the 1992 Columbus Reconciliation Forum, accompanied by prof. Francesco Corongiu, dean of the School of Sciences of the University of Cagliari, Franco Meloni, Anna Saba, Antonello Dessi, Guido Pegna, Alessandra Menesini, Andrea Portas, Annamaria Janin, Giovanna Caltagirone and Luisa Amat di Salfilippo arrived in New York for the Plexus event "*The Nuragic Voyage of the Elisabeth.*" The day after their arrival, at the NYU Institute of Afro-American Affairs, directed by Earl S. Davis, I managed a meeting with Francesco Corongiu, Franco Meloni, David Ecker, Okechukwu Odita, and George Chaikin to start to develop a plan for the organization in 1995 of the Second International Well Being Reconciliation Forum, to be held on the occasion of the 100 years of the Guglielmo Marconi's radio.

On October 11, at Cooper Union, it was organized by George Chaikin a presentation of a Guglielmo Marconi radio experiment conducted by Guido Pegna. Then, on Columbus Day, October 12, at St. John Divine Cathedral, we presented the Plexus art event *The 1993 Columbus-Marconi Open Call for the Well Being in the XXI Century* made as collaborative effort with Patricia Parker Nicholson, Lorenzo Pace, Miguel Algarin, Alfa Diallo, Joanee Freedom, David Boyle, Rolando Politi, Josè Rodriguez, Maria Pia Marsala, Rodolfo Maria Dernini, George Chaikin, Fred Floyd, Andrea Grassi, Franco Meloni, Anna Saba, Antonello Dessi, Guido Pegna, Luisa Amat di Sanfilippo, Andrea Portas, Giovanna Caltagirone, Alessandra Menesini, Annamaria Janin, Valeria Meloni. The day after, at the NYU Barney Auditorium, to reinforce the collaboration

between NYU and the University of Cagliari, toward the organization of the 2° Well Being Reconciliation Forum, it was organized the fourth NYU Summer Institute Lower East Side Round Table, named "*The Voyage of the Elisabeth.*" It was presented by Leonard Lehrer, Chairman of the NYU Art and Art Professions Department, hosted by David Ecker and chaired by Earl S. Davis, Director of the NYU Institute of Afro-American Affairs. Participants were the dean Francesco Corongiu of the School of Science of the University of Cagliari, Franco Meloni as coordinator of the new Interdepartmental Well Being Center under establishment at the University of Cagliari, Jose Rodriguez as community program director of Plexus in New York, and I as general secretary of the International Well Being and Reconciliation Committee.

In the evening, at the Nuyorican Poets Café, with Jose Rodriguez, Lois Griffith, Franco Meloni, Rolando Politi, Anna Saba, Antonello Dessi, Patricia Nicholson Parker, Annamaria Janin, Giovanna Caltagirone, Andrea Portas, David Boyle, we performed *the Repatriation of Art into the Community*, as a wedding party between two copies of the Mickey Pinero's American Indian chief statuette.

Figure 50

The Repatriation of Art into the Community



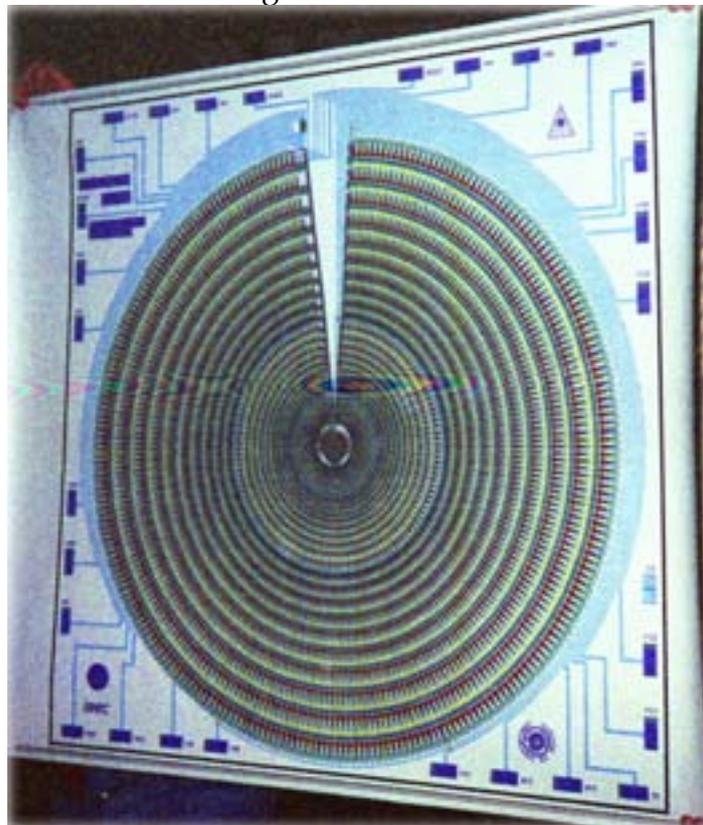
Anna Saba, Franco Meloni, Lois Griffith, José Rodriguez, Annamaria Janin, David Boyle, Antonello Dessi, Nuyorican Poets Cafe, New York, 1993, photo by the researcher.

From November 3 to November 15 1993, at the NYU Rosenberg Gallery, it was held the Plexus art event *A Contract to be negotiated: Columbus Egg, the Living Plexus Black Box of "The Voyage of the Elisabeth*. It took the form of a two weeks Atelier des Arts that I curated with by Frank Pio, with artistic contributions from Alfa Diallo, Josè Rodriguez, Patricia Nicholson Parker, Fred Floyd, Ray Kelly, Lorenzo Pace, Hanne Lauridsen, John Shuttleworth, Andrea Grassi, Maria Pia Marsala, Rodolfo Maria Dernini, Aaron Barr, Lynne Kanter, Ivan Dalla Tana, George Chaikin, Eve Vaterlaus, Georgetta Stonefish, Carol Black, Rolando Politi, Luis Vergara, John Torreano, Gerry Snyder.

At the entrance of the Rosenberg Gallery, it was displaced the George Chaikin's *Haddamard Matrix* blueprint as a mandala, orienting the audience in reading the *Voyage of the Elisabeth* into *Plexus Black Box*, coming from the 1992 Christopher Columbus Reconciliation event, held in Sardinia.

Figure 51

Looking at Plexus Black Box



Artwork by George Chaikin, Rosenberg Gallery, New York, 1993.

Under the George's blueprint, there was the photo made in Rome in my house in June 1991, showing George Chaikin and Giancarlo Schiaffini in front of the George's blueprint, while holding the *Colombina* boat and two small photos, with David Ecker, Giancarlo Schiaffini, Lynne Kanter and me with the *Colombina* cat, made in 1990, in my house in Rome. A copy of the poem *The Box* by Alfa Diallo was placed on top the blueprint.

The audience, to go in the main room, had to pass through two cocoons sculptures reflecting life and death made by Frank Pio. On the right wall, near the entrance, it was placed the *Plexus Boxing Ring for Freedom*. At the bottom of boxing ring, there was the dossier "Prehistory," the first of the ten Plexus Black Box dossiers, that, as an artist-researcher, I made to document, one per year, Plexus activities until 1990.

Near the entrance, I placed several *NYU Consent Forms for Research Activities Involving Human Subjects*, as part of an art altar installation, that I made with some earth mound on the floor, the Ray Kelly's icosahedrons sculpture, with inside a picture of the Rivington School before its shut down by the City of New York, and the Nuraghic Warrior sculpture, buried at Rivington School in 1989 and recovered in June of 1993, as part of my field research for the NYU Lower East Side Summer Institute. The small copy of the black box floating sculpture by Ciro Ciriaco was suspended from the ceiling, above the Mickey Pinero's American Indian statuette, placed next the book *Toward the Well Being of Humankind* and a large amount of Plexus records. As a symbolic *Living Plexus Black Box*, the Eve Vaterlaus' *Homunculus* sculpture, showing a little man closed in a large bottle full of water, was displaced next to the photos documentation of Georgetta Stonefish at the 1992 Columbus Reconciliation Well Being Forum.

For two weeks, there was a full calendar of activities involving artists, community people and art students from the NYU course *Current Issues in Art Education*, conducted by prof. David Ecker, in which I and Frank Pio studied as students.

As a ritual ending of this intensive program, two boxes were overflowed with Plexus records and relics, placed inside and outside of them. Before to seal them,

participants and audience signed the *Plexus Boxing Ring of Freedom*. Then, the two sealed boxes were moved out from the Rosenberg Gallery by Josè Rodriguez, David Boyle, Rolando Politi, John Shuttlewoth as a *symbolic Repatriation of Plexus Black Box into the Lower East Side Community* and carried to Alfa Diallo's *House of Originals*, in East 13th St and Avenue B.

This was the last event under my inquiry.

Figure 52

A New Art Contract to Be Signed in Goree



Artwork by Gaetano Brundu, re-elaborated by Andrea Portas, Cagliari, 1988.

CHAPTER VI

A CLOSE READING OF PLEXUS BLACK BOX

The researcher identifies non feasible to conclude this inquiry with “*one-point perspective*” understanding, in coherence with his employed deconstructionist strategies described in Chapter III. Therefore, in this final Chapter, he offers a multi-points perspective understanding of the project under study by presenting “direct quotes” from accounts by Plexus insiders identified relevant through his hermeneutical procedures.

These “insider” accounts put forward a multi-perspective “emic” understanding of *Plexus Black Box*, through a multiplicity of levels of understandings, as an international community-based art project, grounded in intersubjective beliefs, supported by evidences publicly accessible.

Following this “bottom-up” methodology, by applying the Ecker’s model of “the artists as researcher,” he gives relevance to subjective accounts made by “insider” artists, usually considered *too much subjectives*, and, therefore, reported in appendices of academic works as marginal references. His “bottom-up” study, validated by shared intersubjective beliefs, reinforces the scientific legitimacy of the “emic” knowledge that Clifford Geertz in *Local Knowledge* claims still underestimated in the academic community. Only a marginal relevance is traditionally given in the Academy to subjective accounts made by “insiders” respect to objective reports conducted by “outsider observers.”

Within this multi-facet perspective, the researcher presents direct “insider” accounts as primary sources for an “emic” aesthetic understanding of *Plexus Black Box*, which provide also a reflexive historical description of the origin and self-development of an international community-based art project “*auto-financed*” by its

participants. Combining hermeneutical and deconstructionist strategies, this aesthetic investigation overwhelms the notion of “autonomous art” by means of a more complex interdependent art environment. Artists from the *margins* of the so called “artworld” have consciously participated in this inquiry. This collective “emic” understanding, bridging theory and practice, permits to look at *Plexus Black Box* from many “inside” and “outside” points of view. All together, these points of view provide the necessary “refracted” social lens, as a methodological tool, through which understanding the complex components related to the international and community-based nature of the art project under study. No attempt was made by the researcher to produce also a formal analysis of art works related to *Plexus Black Box*.

In 1994, *Plexus Black Box* was reopened scholarly by the researcher for his NYU investigation. With a suspicious attitude and an “emic” behaviour, he reopened *Plexus Black Box* by using the model of “the artist as researcher,” sharing at the same time its cultural patrimony with all Plexus participants.

Participants as well as the researcher were conscious of the interference of his inquiry on the “normal” life of Plexus and of its natural evolution, as well as on his “insider” identity of Plexus 23s and Plexus International coordinator.

Plexus Black Box never was fully closed, but its “re-opening” for academic reasons let many participants to be aware of what was contained, including their own experiences. It allowed them to express their concerns about “inside” and “outside” positions, expressed and collected during the inquiry. Jacques Derrida has pointed out the polarity between “outside” and “inside” as well as between “homogeneous” and “heterogeneous.”

The “dialectics” of the same and the other, of outside and inside, of the homogeneous and the heterogeneous, are, as you know, among the most contorted ones. The outside can always become again an “object” in the polarity subject/object, or the reassuring reality of what is outside the text; and there is sometimes an “inside” that is as troubling as the outside may be reassuring. This is not to be overlooked in the critique of interiority and subjectivity.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, p. 67, 1981.

As an “outsider” observer and as well as a Plexus “insider,” the researcher was aware that the task that he had to accomplish in his inquiry was among the most “contorted” ones, as Derrida argues, because of the risk of the Western critique of the values of subjectivity and objectivity. Therefore, in Chapter IV, he performed his “double” deconstructionist strategic move by “*positioning*” himself as an “outsider” reader, following the “double writing” model of Derrida, wherein he could explore the openness of his “double reading.” Then, at the left margin of the Chapter IV pages, he positioned “insider” recollections by Plexus historical participants, made from recorded interviews, with no paragraphs indented to give a sense of their flowing speech. Third, he wrote his parallel critical reading. These “double writing” and “double reading” acts merged together and in turn produced a multiplex aesthetic experience, offering the possibility to reach an “emic” understanding. This deconstructionist strategy allowed the artist as researcher to grasp during his hermeneutical process an “emic” understanding of the real possibility to have “insider” participants “participating” together with the researcher in presenting their interpretations.

Hans-Georg Gadamer names “*an interpretative participation*” the process of interpretation, in which, as an “insider,” the interpreter participates with her/his own specific historical angle of interpretation. In the critical hermeneutical process performed by the researcher, “insider” interpretative participations, collectively gathered, evolved into a global interconnected participation with *Plexus Black Box*, the object/subject of the study, not anymore perceived just as a passive body waiting on the anatomical table to be sectioned “*alive*” for academic investigations. The perennial issue of the interdependent relation between object and subject was raised up by Plexus in its first artopera *Goya Time, 1985, New York*, with multiplex interpretation of the same object/subject *La Maja*, and stressed again in Plexus artopera *Eve*, with hundreds of artists as art slaves chained together with their artworks as a statement against any kind of separation between artists, artworks, and community.

Cultural identity and artistic re-appropriation are relevant clues for an effective “multicultural” understanding of *Plexus Black Box*, surviving from “outsider” cultural interventions.

Current “multicultural” approaches have lost “credibility” by turning out to be, after all, “monoculture” context-bound as David Ecker argues in “The Politics of Aesthetic Inquiry.”

Global debates over human rights have sensitized groups and individuals to resist intervention by outsiders as a bid for domination. In turn, curators, collectors, critics, artists, ethnographers, educators and other professionals are becoming increasingly self-conscious about the appropriation of cultural material. Today, even aesthetic contemplation at a distance is questioned...Art educators, of course, are caught up in the debate. Professed objectivity (now read “political neutrality”) in the name of one or another scientific or humanistic method of inquiry has lost credibility....First, the issue of objectivity. In our efforts to promote and practice a multicultural approach to art in the schools, there is an underlying problem that, as far as I know, has gone unrecognized in the fields of aesthetics and art education....to understand the arts of another culture would seem to require that we identify not only the similarities and differences between that culture and our own, but also that we make explicit the *basis* for such comparisons. Failure to do so would seem to obviate any knowledge-claims resulting from such comparative inquiry. The problem, then, is this: *Any* basis we select will itself be culture-bound. That is, our efforts at cross-cultural understanding we have already compromised the outcome...by reducing one culture to the terms of another. Our “multicultural” approach to the arts turns out to be monocultural after all. ¹⁶⁸

The “contorted” experience of David Ecker as an “insider” of the project under inquiry has played a seminal role in the growing of a general sense of confidence and genuine understanding among Plexus participants of different background. His “emic” knowledge, gained *in the first person* on the field research of this study as a Plexus participant as well as chairperson of the NYU Dissertation Committee of this Ph. D. study, has offered an unique way to know, from “inside” and “outside,” the project under inquiry, as he points out as an “insider” in his recollection, fully reported in Appendix A.

I was not part of the original group which started Plexus. I was introduced to Plexus through Angiola Churchill and I served as adviser of Sandro Dernini. At certain point in 1990, I got involved because of my interest in the living traditions of art in Sardinia and since then I have participated in 3-4 Plexus events. Plexus for me is a coalition of artists, engaged in different ways with many divergent modes with art, coming together to work on short term projects without any unifying agreement on political or philosophical

¹⁶⁸ David W. Ecker, “The Politics of Aesthetic Inquiry”, *Journal of Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Research in Art Education*, p. 7, 1991.

meanings on Plexus, without any unifying terms beforehand. Over this time my grasp of events ranged from a total misunderstanding or a total confusion completely not understanding or a total confusion of what is happening just like everybody else to some sense of direction and that is what you can expect from it. Periodically everybody felt confused and each role got confused. On other occasions I felt I understood what was happening.

The “emic” knowledge produced by the study reinforced the beliefs of Plexus participants, by becoming more conscious to be members of an ongoing international collaborative effort. This new emerging awareness allowed insiders to move themselves from their individual misunderstandings toward a collective overall understanding of the multifacets nature of Plexus. This “emic” knowledge, provided by a gathering of different insider understandings, has reinforced at the same time the study and the object of the study, re-activating *Plexus Black Box* to re-emerge after years of frozen performances and activities.

During the inquiry, *Plexus Black Box* elements re-emerged in a serendipitous manner from the stock of knowledge at hand of the researcher.

In any case, there is an element of surprise inherent to the newly emergent and unanticipated relevances which supersede and cover the former set. Merton has applied the term “serendipity” to this phenomenon. It originated in the fact that all of our anticipations are necessarily empty unless fulfilled or annihilated by the subsequent events.¹⁶⁹

Plexus Black Box elements showed many different conscious and unconscious facets, some immediately present, others “dormant.”

To begin with, not all the elements of the stock of knowledge are simply stored away for further use. Some are not “dormant” although it can be said that they are neutralized in a particular way. Some of these elements are permanently present and never released from grip, although they are not present within the kernel of the thematic field of consciousness, but always present in its margin.¹⁷⁰

The non static layers of the researcher's actual interest on which his “insider” understanding was coming and going through, during his interpretational process, were further increased by his “close reading” of all Plexus “insider” recollections.

As our static analysis of the structure of our stock of knowledge will show, we carry along at any time a certain number of elements of our knowledge not consistent in themselves and not compatible with one other. This is so, on the one hand, because we live simultaneously on different level of reality, and on

¹⁶⁹ Alfred Schutz, *Reflections on the Problem of Relevances*, p. 113, 1970.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

the other, because by our autobiographical situation we are involved with different layers of our personality (even in that sector of the world on which we bestow, for the time being, an accent of reality.)¹⁷¹

This inquiry conducted by an “insider” became an active component of a Plexus self-reflective understanding learning process of Plexus participants, who moving from the margins of the kernel of *Plexus Black Box* supplied the researcher with the necessary information to identify, at the metalevel of the Ecker and Kaelin's taxonomy, a survival metatheoretical tendency in Plexus, which allowed margins to be centers and viceversa within an endless creative process. This Plexus survival metatheoretical shifting tendency is not easy to be identified, because of the open shifting multi facet nature of the art project under investigation. By applying the Alfred Schutz's system of relevances, through a close reading of “insider” accounts, the researcher identified the underlying theme *In Order to Survive* as the Plexus survival metatheoretical unifying ground on which so many artists have converged together.

The open call *In Order to Survive* by William Parker, presented in 1984, in New York, in the middle of East Sixth Street, within a community event to stop the gentrification of the Lower East Side, is of paramount relevance for the understanding of the survival community-based cultural identity of project under study. For its relevance, the researcher fully reports the William Parker's *In Order to Survive*, 1984.

“We cannot separate the starving child from the starving musician, both things are caused by the same thing capitalism, racism and the putting of military spending ahead of human rights. The situation of the artist is a reflection of America's whole attitude toward life and creativity.”

There was a period during the 1960's in which John Coltrane, Malcolm X, Duke Ellington, Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, Bill Dixon, Sun Ra, Martin Luther King and Albert Ayler were all alive and active.

Avant garde jazz contemporary improvised music coming out of the Afro-American was at a peak of creativity and motion. ABC Impulse was recording Coltrane and Archie Shepp, ESP Disk was recording the music of Albert Ayler, Sunny Murray, Sonny Simmons, Giuseppi Logan, Noah Howard, Frank Wright, Marion Brown, Henry Grimes, Alan Silva and many other exponents of the music. Blue Note and Prestige Records were recording Andrew Hill, Eric Dolphy, Sam Rivers, Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry among others.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 130.

Radio stations such as WLIB now called BLS and WRVR which now plays pop music were both playing jazz 24 hours a day including some of the new music of Coltrane, Shepp, Ayler, and Ornette Coleman.

There was energy in the air as people marched and protested in the north and south demanding human rights, demanding that the senseless killing in Vietnam stop. Simultaneously, like musicians before them the avant garde became aware of the necessity to break away from tradition business practices. Like musicians lives being in the hand of producers and nightclubs owners who only wish to make money and exploit the musician. The musicians began to produce their own concerts and put out their own records in order to gain more control over their lives.

The Jazz Composers' Guild formed by Bill Dixon was one of the first musicians' organization in the 60's to deal with the self determination of the artist. Other efforts had been made by Charles Mingus, Sun Ra as they both had produced their own concerts and records in the 50's. To follow was the A.A.C.M. (Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians) formed about a year after the Jazz Composers' Guild, and Milford Graves, Don Pullen, record company SRP (Self Reliance Program).

Musicians got together with poets to put out a magazine called the Crickett, all the articles were written by poets and musicians themselves. It was edited by Imanu Baraka, Larry Neal, A.B. Spellman, advisors on the magazine were Milford Graves, Cecil Taylor and Sun Ra. Contributors included Roger Riggins, Stanley Crouch, Albert Ayler, and Ishmael Reed. The motto was "black Music in Evolution."

Just as the music and the movement began to break ground establishing itself, several things happened: Malcolm X was assassinated, Martin Luther King was assassinated, John Coltrane died, British rock and roll began to change the music industry. Not only could record be sold they could sell posters, books, wigs, dolls, and thousands of electric guitars to the youth of America. They promoted and pushed rock music as the real thing yet when these rock stars were interviewed they would say always site jazz or blues as the origin of rock. Also at this time there was a sudden increase in the availability of drugs in the black community. Every apparent gain as a result of the civil rights movement was not given up without fight. All gains were achieved because America had a gun to its's head. To question, to speak of change was never willingly allowed the 60's movement was so strong that it couldn't be denied. They could silence a few poets but they couldn't silence an entire nation. The 1970's was a period of tranquilization. There was no mass movement to continue the motion set forth by the 60's, it was a ten year period of systematically silencing and discouraging the truth. Poets were made to feel like criminals; people were going back in time because it seemed easier than going forward. Record companies began only to record safe music, musicians began to water down their music. The C.I.A. and F.B.I. had files on the music they knew who was going along with the program, those who bought cars and played electric music and those whose politics were considered a threat to the existing inertia. The neglect of the poor, the neglect of the arts is no accident, this country is sustained by killing off all that is beautiful, that deals with reality. They will go to any lengths to hold back the truth, to prevent the individual from hearing and seeing his or her own vision of life. Some people are controlled by neglect while other are controlled by making them stars.

As the 80's arrived this fire music that talked about revolution and healing had almost vanished only a few musicians continue to play and develop it. The sleepiness of the 70's gave birth to a new electronic age of computers and video machines. Where ever human energy could be saved it was popular music lost what little identity it had. In listening to today's pop music it's hard to tell whether the group is male or female, black or white, synthersizers have replaced living musicians. We have all been desensitized people walk around in dazes sitting back while these blood thirsty gangsters have free reign of the country and of the people's lives. Our food source, our housing

source are owned and operated by power hungry people who do not have our best interest in mind, they only wish to make a profit. All of this is not new knowledge, it has been said many times before, the message must be constantly repeated, intellectual knowledge of the problems is not enough, we must feel the blade piercing the hearts of all that are oppressed, jailed, starved and murdered by these criminals who call themselves leaders who act in the name of peace and democracy. Since we have little we must band together pulling all our little resources to form a base in which to work. We must learn from all the mistakes of the past dropping any selfish notions in order for this movement to succeed, in order for it to take root and begin to grow. We must ask the questions why am I an artist? Why do I play music? What is the ultimate goal? Am I playing with the same spirit that I played with 10 years ago or have I just become more technically proficient? The idea is to cultivate an audience by performing as much as possible on a continuous basis, not waiting to be offered work rather creating work. Uniting with all those who hear. Those who are willing to go all the way. We must put pressure on those with power to give some of it up (picketing, boycotts, petitions, what ever it takes) and finally we must define ourselves and not be defined by others. We must take control of our lives, building a solid foundation for the future.

Strategic Survival by Art Withdrawing

The insider David Boyle describes in his paper *La Scatola Nera* (The Black Box), fully reported in Appendix A, how the project under study originated in 1989.

At the finish of July, we commenced a comforting phase of auto-analysis that was made possible by the relative confinement of the Plexus movement within the scatola nera (black box). The confinement is accomplished by utilizing the material residue of the movement that we call documentation in a ritual manner. Until this decisive moment/action the Plexus movement was following the traditional path into history, but by this action which constitutes an intervention in the process, we choose our point from which to address history. The traditional path included a gradual abandonment of active interest in the movement. Founding members of the movement cited dissatisfaction with the shift within the movement away from new ideas. The action taken by the remaining elements of the movement to place the movement in a sort of stasis to facilitate analysis represents a sort of retrospective consensus.

The insider Franco Meloni in a note to David Ecker, fully reported in Appendix A, recalls how *Plexus Black Box* has been created "in order to survive."

In a sense, PLEXUS means connections and transmission of knowledge. In particular, remembering once more the absolute necessity to connect our places of work by computer electronic mail, I want to continue to play with the Black Box. First of all, we must give a definition of it. The Black Box has been created in order to survive. To survive against the complexity of the problems that made uncontrolled the route toward a common goal. To survive against the egoism of many of the participants to the project. To survive against the responsibility of the ambitious target, more or less future. To survive against the fragmentation of the different objectives of PLEXUS. In this way, the Black Box, represents a quiet place created to

discuss the situation according to a scientific method. But, is it possible to do it? Clearly not.

Plexus Black Box, as an intentional strategic survival art action, was conceived to foster new exchanges among Plexus artists through his “*withdrawing*” action.

The insider Fabrizio Bertuccioli in his paper *The Artist in the First Person*, fully reported in Appendix A, conceptualizes the art withdrawing as a survival model for the reinvention of exchanges between homogeneous and heterogeneous spheres.

Withdrawing in order to exchange. The social composition of a freely composed world is a behavioural system that relates the homogeneous and the heterogeneous. The homogeneous is the world of industrial production, wherein economy is the model which determines relationships. The production of exchange is therein reduced to zero and a loss of possible values is determined, the model imposing itself on the heterogeneous through a refusal to communicate which create marginality and impoverishment. Withdrawing, getting estranged from that model is an attempt to turn this poverty into wealth. Art as the realm of “*gratuitous*” is the invention of possibilities of free withdrawal and the production of acts, events, objects, etc... through which an exchange is reinvented between unrelated and heterogeneous spheres, that of the useful and that of the useless (play). The reinvention of exchange between these spheres, the re-establishing of a relationship between homogeneous and heterogeneous, allows us to identify values which are necessary for the survival of any civilization. This is the work engaged in by artists as utopian producers of the “*gratuitous*,” a work for which too often they have to pay the price. To deny marginality as a chance for enriching the exchange between those heterogeneous who withdraw from the dominant homogeneous, to propose an attitude toward the programming and production of projects which actually amount to denying the chance itself, is a crime against freedom and against a freely composed world, before than a crime against creativity and art. Reinventing the locations of art is an operative element in this marginality. When one sees a piece of art in a place that is already “*valorized*,” in a place already assigned to art, everything one sees acquires “*authority*,” becomes important, and exchange becomes impossible. When, instead, one sees it simply just like that, in an ordinary place, without the prop of the ‘*appropriate*’ place and surroundings, one finds it easier to criticize, one is forced into a relationship with it. It is the capacity to perceive normality as opposed to the expectation of an extraordinary event, which, in most the cases, is just a prefabricated display. The production of use value consists in the attribution of sense to the world of signs and objects which man produces for man (play). Art is where it is, not what it is.

Fabrizio Bertuccioli further argues as follows:

Why is man an exemplary citizen as long as he lives in noise, but becomes a rebel as soon as he sets about listening to himself? The live TV news becomes the only acknowledged reality in the world. The individual must make himself fitting and predictable if he hopes for a place in a world where every fantasy has found its justification. An event is accepted only if its presentation cancels the risks that preceded it. Since art in itself is experiment and research, it is the attest way to experiment and research in any field (it is the natural place for such activities). The artist as research scientist must become the critic of fame. Artistic production must be capable of doing away with ‘the opposition between wealth and poverty,’ the opposition between the abstract

and the concrete in the human condition. Whoever engages in art-making has to adopt toward the present time the attitude implied by the concept of the artistic work's gratuitousness. Art is the "need to exercise humanity" without hoping for fame, without falling into worry about the future and into anxiety to succeed, to grow attached to a piece of work, to suffer the limitations of reason, to lose sight of life. An attitude of gratuitous expense is the first form taken by the imagination of wealth, its source, while giving up living, storing, and saving up are its contrary. The artist today mustn't work for the 'art business' only, mustn't make use of his imagination only in the making of his work. He has to use it also in his everyday life, determining new relationships which are coherent with his spirit, with his inner life, thus accepting other people's creative energies as well as his own. Only starting from a way of making which is not ruled by the laws of the production of goods, which is beyond the condition imposed by a culture that models every human activity on economy, and that on this model has moulded every form of production, invention, communication, socialization, and formation of personal identity, only starting from a way of making which is gratuitous from the point of view of these laws it will become possible to re-invent the 'location of art.' Only starting from this condition it will become possible to identify a new wealth which is unity inside the person between bodily and spiritual being and unity among people, and to imagine the life of a society which is free from fear and freely composed. Then, maybe, something will be born that we could feel like calling art. It is thus necessary that artists, 'withdrawing,' work in first person as producers of themselves and of their own projects, grouping themselves into a society in which each artist is present with his own identity, his own credit line, and his own product, giving body to the heterogeneous which invites dialogue with the homogeneous (which would like art to be industrial production and the artist a follower of orders: star system) on the results of the ongoing and ever changing research, thus setting in motion a dynamics of behaviours and relationships from which new life sparks.

The insider Gaetano Brundu describes in his recollection, reported partially in Appendix A, the escaping of Plexus from the art system of the artworld as a methodological necessity for the survival grow of Plexus.

Plexus has often given the impression of escaping from the system of art and its codes of communication. So therefore it is difficult to identify its relationships with the problematics of contemporary art. If we can find the problem and if we can see at which level of involvement and understanding, we can distinguish between objective and subjective relationships. Furthermore Plexus is widely innovative (but is it?), the problem can be rather finding what distinguishes the surrounding environment, so we need to define the intrinsic characteristics. And for this reason I think that it is still not arrived the time, because to close Plexus in a label, it is to declare its end. Or would be only the end of its evolving age? This can be something we can think about over the next few months. There is still the fact, rather evident, that many manifestations of Plexus express themselves in a sense of inadequateness, a sort of unprotected lackness compare with the communication in act within the system of art. A little like as a ship of fools, like a balloon without a router going around the sky. But this can be the element that gives its originality. In this fragile and instable limit between folly and genius, between instinct and historical awareness, between excellent flights and falls to the levels of jerks or of pigs, it has played the defining, the destiny, and identity of Plexus.

Gaetano Brundu further argues, as follows:

Its exit from the system could be important. But how many people are aware about it? How many see the methodological necessity in it? Somebody might fall back often into the temptation of finding a way to get in to the system, a way to "success;" and this is what I meant before about the jerks...To exit from the system could be a methodological tool (and it can be also a praxis) that can modify and help Plexus grow in reference to the same system; and in the final analysis it could help that same system grow. If I have to make a reference for Plexus about the problematic issues of contemporary art, I wouldn't even know which components to exactly mention. We could speak about "Ephemeral Art," Narrative Art; but also visionary sensibility, that is a characterization that is not only contemporary. In the history of Plexus there is a lot of Conceptual Art but it is only a component part. And so: what can we connect the metaphor of Plexus Art Cooperas and of other events? to the Carnival in Rio? Or furthermore: what sense does it have to attribute, to what connect the frequent jumps of sloppy and irrational acts, at the limits of craziness? to the first Dada? Plexus produces the event but produces also the object, that which in the Storage we called relics. Certainly Plexus has been quite inclined toward "the event;" characterized by (it seems to me) the escape from reason by some of the players.

Ursula Meyer foresees in "the withdrawal of art" a way "to restore art to artists."

The shift from object to concept denotes disdain for the notion of commodities - the sacred cow of this culture. Conceptual artists, propose a professional commitment that restores art to artists, rather than to "money vendors. The withdrawal of art into itself may be its saving grace. In the same sense that science is for scientists, and philosophy is for philosophers, art is for artists.¹⁷²

Plexus Black Box was conceptualized as a strategic survival tactic for Plexus to resist through its historic collapse as it has happened to many avant-garde art movements. The intentional artistic "freezing" of activities by giving more time for self-reflective understandings has reinforced Plexus participants' beliefs and helped members to become aware of the historical avant-garde art identity of Plexus, made by its long continuous activity starting in 1982, against the usual historical shortness of many artists.

A gimmick, a mere novelty, exhausts itself quickly, often helped along by minor artists who recognize its capacity for easy adaptation. It is frequently alarming to find out what work does not survive a short period like five years, which artists can go no farther with their one original idea.¹⁷³

Art theories have played a critical role in the success and the failure of many historical art movements and raised the question of whether art still has a future as part of a progressive linear history.

Just think of the dazzling succession of art-movements in our century: Fauvism, the Cubism, Futurism, Vorticism, Synchronism, Abstractionism,

¹⁷² Ursula Meyers, *Conceptual Art*, p. xx, 1972.

¹⁷³ Lucy Lippard, *Changing. Essays in Art Criticism*, p. 29, 1971.

Expressionism, Abstract Expressionism, Pop, Op, Minimalism, Post-Minimalism, Conceptualism, Photorealism, Abstract Reason, Neo-Expressionism - simply to list some of the more familiar ones. Fauvism lasted about two years, and there was a time when a whole period of art history seemed destined to endure about five months, or half a season. Creativity at that time seemed more to consist in making a period than in making a work. The imperative of art were virtually historical imperatives: Make an art-historical period! and success consisted in producing an accepted innovation. If you were successful, you had the monopoly on producing works on one else could, since no one else had made the period with which you and perhaps a few collaborators were from now on to be identified....And each period required a certain amount of quite complex theory in order that the often very minimal objects could be transacted onto the plane of art.¹⁷⁴

The Repatriation of Art into the Community

The exit in 1993 of two containers from the NYU Rosenberg Gallery going back to the Lower East Side Community, as symbolic repatriation of *Plexus Black Box* was the closing act of the last event inquired under this study. *The Repatriation of Art into the Community* is of paramount relevance for understanding the community-based identity of *Plexus Black Box* project. Its aims was the reinforcement of artists' beliefs in the community on the possibility to bring back *art* at home, to repatriate *Plexus Black Box* as a work of art, complete with its financial value of an art commodity. Plexus strategy was to shift in this way into the community not only a relevant economic flow but also to reactivate a participatory healing *well being* process by driving together the Community and the Academy into a ethical and aesthetic community-based route correction in the human use of the human being. Plexus foresaw in it a critical condition for the survival and advancement of humankind.

To understand the origin of Plexus "*Repatriation of Art into the Community*" concept is relevant "the repatriation of anthropology," a shift made in the '80s by American anthropologists working abroad.

The reasons for this trend that we call repatriation are multiple. There is less funding for social-science research, especially for ethnography abroad, the practical applications of which are not apparent. Host societies, protective of their nationalisms, have complicated the acquisition of research permits. And there is indeed a growing awareness in anthropology that the functions of ethnography at home are as compelling and legitimate as they have been

¹⁷⁴ Arthur Danto, "The End of Art", p. 29, 1984.

abroad. Fears that the subject of anthropology, the exotic other, is disappearing have proved groundless: distinctive cultural variation is where you find it, and is often more important to document at home than abroad. There are many modes in which anthropology is repatriating itself. These include providing ethnographic data designed for administrative policy and, in the interest of social reform, alerting the public to problems of society's victims and disadvantaged.¹⁷⁵

In Dakar, the insider Youssouph Traore describes in his presentation, fully reported in Appendix A, Plexus as an experimental project of interaction between artists and scientists, stimulating mutual cooperation and critical dialogue among all participants.

Plexus is a project of an international structure of communication for artists and scientists interested in the interaction of art and science within the everyday life. Born in 1982 in New York, Plexus has evolved considerably in the realm of the experimental and interdisciplinary research. Since 1985, it never stopped to stimulate the mutual process of artistic and scientific cooperation. Cooperation realized by the critic dialogue without barriers, with also the use of the new communication technologies. Next to these practical aspects, Plexus has other dimensions more or less complex, place for reflection, and for information.

The insider Jose Rodriguez foresees in the *Repatriation of Art into the Community* the possibility for "the artist in the first person" to regain the power of self definition within the community as he describes in his presentation *The Voyage of the Elisabeth: Cultural Navigation and the Community*, fully reported in Appendix A.

The artist in the first person is the possibility of regaining the power of defining the artistic creation by the artist and as such by eliminating the condition of commodity to their creation. And most important the artist in the first person is defining his creation as a cultural production. This ethical action is only possible through a social praxis within the community. This social praxis of the artist allows the community to start defining. The community won't be defined by an image and delimited by the dominant structures. This possibility of the community to define itself allows the community to redefine their self-esteem and to determine their own cultural production. Also, this auto definition will allow the community to regain the possibility of knowledge. Not a knowledge base in the domination of nature and as such a relation based in the domination of one subject to another, but a knowledge based in enhancing the creative subject. Been the subject of a creative entity allows the community to develop a communicative consciousness and overcome their role of slaves of the dominant structures.

Jose Rodriguez further argues how "art defines the community and the artist defines his community and the community defines art."

¹⁷⁵ George Marcus and Michael M. Fischer, *Anthropology as a Cultural Critique. An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*, 113, 1986.

PLEXUS has a goal something called “cultural navigation” and what is trying to do in all these ten years is to make a bridge between those different cultures and also make to see the artist as a person of the community and not to see the artist production within his cultural context. The Artists in the first person are the main concern. Plexus also try to points out that the living tradition is what defines community. Art defines the community and the artist defines his community and the community defines art and this has been Plexus’s reason to build in Lower East Side the collaboration with CUANDO. The collaboration started in 1985 and it began to develop an international house of cultures of CUANDO where different cultures come together and try to understand each other.

In his recollection, fully reported in Appendix A, the insider José Rodríguez describes the relationship of Plexus with the Community and its development, which he identifies in three main phases.

From the Portorican cultural tradition from which I come from, I was educated that the artists are the first voices speaking on behalf of the community, and that the artists are not separated from the community in which they belong. The artists are significant components of their society. The different communities and artists, involved in the history of Plexus, were both interactive significant components of the Plexus development. In a historical grounding of Plexus, there are certain elements which have to be established to understand how Plexus Black Box became a metaphor of the cultural growing of Plexus as a community-based art organization. In the Plexus historical growing it is possible to identify different phases of development.

The first phase started in the end of 1981, in New York, when Sandro Dernini, Giancarlo Schiaffini and other Italian artists, thought to create a loose organization with the idea to open a space in which the artists "in the first person" could be the coproducers of their own art activities. This original idea took shape in 1982, in a performance space in the Chelsea area of New York, named Plexus, dedicated to the interaction of the different art forms of expression, without any necessary involvement of the community, on the traditional model art for the sake of art.

The second phase began in 1984 when Plexus, lost his performance space, and moved in the Lower East Side of New York, at the Shuttle Theater. In the Lower East Side it was a radical cultural and social tradition through which Plexus began its second phase. This second stage could be named the Plexus art-opera phase as a collective art form of expression to perform collectively their egocentric ideas. It was still part of the autonomous concept of art but started to get involved with people from the community like Sarah Farley, a local leader of an homesteaders community, Miguel Pinero and Miguel Algarin, originators of the Nuyoricans Poets Café and Williams Parker, leader of Sound Unity a large community jazz collective. They were groups with a different history and expressing the alienation of their community in their own languages and defending their presence in the struggle of the Lower East Side under a heavy cultural and real estate gentrification pressure. This encounter started to change the entire personality of Plexus by understanding that art was not only about their individual art expression but to integrate their art forms into the community life in which they were placed.

This move Plexus to grow in a third phase which it was called "co-operas" in which, in 1987-1988, the artists started to think also in collective art forms. Plexus was forced to start to develop what the historical art avant-garde left to be developed in the direction of the relation between power and community. This development brings to this last recent phase of Plexus, started in 1989 to the present, which it is called the reconciliation stage, in which Plexus got involved in politics with academic institutions. In this context, the concept of

Plexus Black Box grew as an educational community-based art project, in a broader cultural sense, creating channels of communication among different communities involved in Plexus activities to express their art experiences in connecting themselves with other cultural diversities and to educate the young generations in this multicultural diversity to understand what is art within and out their own culture, and to accept that the world, the society and any community is made by a diversity of many kind groups or cultural experiences. It will help to define themselves.

The role of Plexus Black Box is to expose, to integrate all aspects of the society, art is one of these as well as science and technology. The concept of Plexus Black Box is a growing concept of a scientific system build in an institutional academic setting which is integrating artistic and cultural experiences in the community met during its growing. The knowledge of one is integrated into the knowledge of other one

The Plexus concept of "*the artist in the first person*" underlines the identity of the artist as the creator as well as the producer of her/his own cultural art products. The tendency of artists to not rethink their role as also producers, is pointed out by Walter Benjamin in "The Author as Producer."

It has been one of the decisive processes of the last ten years in Germany that a considerable proportion of its productive minds, under the pressure of economic conditions, have passed through a revolutionary development in their attitudes, without being able simultaneously to rethink their own work, their relation to the means of production, their technique, in a really revolutionary way. I am speaking, as you see, of the so-called left-wing intellectuals, and will limit myself to the bourgeois left. In Germany the leading politico-literary movements of the last decade have emanated from this left-wing intelligentsia. I shall mention two of them, Activism and New Matter-of-factness, to show with these examples that a political tendency, however revolutionary it may seem, has a counterrevolutionary function as the writer feels his solidarity with the proletariat only in his attitudes not as a producer.¹⁷⁶

The intellectual responsibility of *the artist in the first person* as a cultural producer is a relevant issue in *Plexus Black Box* as is pointed out by the insider José Rodríguez in his recollection, fully reported in Appendix A.

Plexus Black Box has its roots in the historical art avant-gardes, in the surrealistic ideas of Antonin Artaud, and in the concept of a responsibility of the artists as intellectuals in the transformation of the society by Antonio Gramsci.

Antonio Gramsci and his conception on the social responsibility of intellectuals and the role of the artists in the struggle for a new culture was connected to the struggling of *Plexus Black Box's* reality, on the occasion of its first presentation within

¹⁷⁶ Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer", *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, p. 300-301, 1984.

the Plexus artopera 1992 *Christopher Columbus: Voyage in the Planet of Art*, staged in 1989, in Rome, at the Metateatro.

It seems evident that, to be precise, one should speak of a struggle for a 'new culture' and not for a 'new art' (in the immediate sense). To be precise, perhaps it cannot even be said that the struggle is for a new artistic content apart from form because content cannot be considered abstractly, in separation from form. To fight for a new art would mean to fight to create new individual artists, which is absurd since artists cannot be created artificially. One must speak of a struggle for a new culture, that is, for a new moral life that cannot but be intimately connected to a new intuition of life, until it becomes a new way of feeling and seeing reality and, therefore, a world intimately ingrained in 'possible artists' and 'possible works of art'. Although one cannot artificially create individual artists, this does not therefore mean that the new cultural world which one is fighting, by stirring up passions and human warmth, does not necessarily stir up 'new artists.'¹⁷⁷

Through *Plexus Black Box*, many people got together thinking for self-determination, within a broader social vision of art, as Micaela Serino points out in her recollection, fully reported in Appendix A.

Finally I was hearing speaking of social problems, injustices, difficulties....within an environment not specifically political! Artist in the first person against the slavery of art (of political parties or of lobbies), for freedom of expression and for safeguarding and recovering cultures and arts on the way of extinction. A metaphoric art journey toward freedom/liberation that brought us to the creation of an International Art Fund in the Maison des Esclaves in Goree/Dakar. A place, dramatically signed by blood, would be instead reanimated by a different thought of a creative movement. Naturally, within a world where the lords of economy are the same of the lords of war (at that time we did not hear yet words such as neo-liberalism, globalization, etc.), our idea was inevitably slowed down by the lack of money.... Because the artist in the first person has with difficulty access to the "sacred" places of the art economy. Not feeling myself among them who have opposed excellent elaborations of thought to theoretical-practical difficulties, I decided to oppose my simple being of artist in the first person by "minting," just to say, with a little pinch of provocation, the money of Plexus. With this act, I wanted to bring back the level of communication between the North and the South of the world on the same plane. The direct exchange (opera = money = opera) without any superiority or inferiority. I started with the Italian liras, taking as a cue the dollar by Anita Steckel that expressed (with the images of a penis) how much the high power was of an exclusive male control. But I wanted go further behind my/our beliefs and feminist protests, so that all could take a global dimension, as then it showed itself.

¹⁷⁷ David Forgacs *A Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935*, p. 395, 1988.

Figure 53

Plexus Art Money



Artwork by Micaela Serino, Rome, 1991.

The Plexus development as an “international cartel” of artists in the first person associated together as independent producers is conceptualized by the insider Rolando Politi in his proposal *Plexus International as a Sweat Equity Cartel*, fully reported in Appendix A.

Plexus International as a “Sweat Equity Cartel of Art” is a beautiful creative tool for a partnership of “the artists in the first person” to exchange his own work without filters or barriers. The “Open Market” eventually will recognize the Cartel, particularly when the issue is the international debt of the Third World vs. the First World, and the role of the artists in the first person for a world route correction in the use of human resources. The currency unit of exchange in the cartel is the “Plexonian” which is equivalent to one ECU (European Currency Unit), one dollar is about one and half ECU. The Plexonian was designed by Micaela Serino in Rome in 1991 as her contribution to the development of the “Plexus Black Bag” project. The Plexonian money will be printed in a limited edition to support the Cartel and the voyage of the Elisabeth from Sardinia to Gorée, Dakar. The Plexonians will be certified by Plexus International Storage and delivered to Plexus Dakar in order to be presented to the Minister of Culture of Senegal for the approval of the Government in support of the Plexus project of the opening of Plexus World Art Bank in Gorée, Dakar. To get some amount of Plexonians it is necessary to donate to the Plexus Cartel of “Sweat Equity” an equivalent amount of value in labour or art works, in reference to building the Art Bank. Example: Sandro, Plexus 23s, buys a “Robotcap 3,” an original certified Plexus art work by Rolando, Plexus 43, for 1000 Plexonians. “Robotcap 3” will receive the certificate of original Plexus work by Plexus International Storage after the Storage has received from Plexus 43 all documentation of that specific art work and verified with the monitoring unit that the member has full credit for what presented as true source of it. Plexus 23s has available an amount of Plexonians against a quantity of labour made by him in support of the Cartel’s

activities. Plexus 23s pays in cash 1000 Plexonians to Plexus 43. Rolando will have credit inside the network of the Cartel to buy for an amount of 1000 Plexonians a quantity of products or labours listed in the "Plexus Black Bag," the shopping tool for the members of the cartel and diffused through internet within the "Plexus Black Box." Plexus members will receive a plastic card membership with a personal ID. number, which will allow to have access to the Cartel's activities and to receive the last news with a list of the new works offered and of what was sold, with relative bids (quotations) in Plexonian currency.

Rolando Politi further clarifies in his text *Plexus International Network*, fully reported in Appendix A, his concept of Plexus as a "Cartel."

Plexus International Network is the tool we use to create "value" and is available only to Plexus members. Einstein theorised: "Energy is neither created nor destroyed, it is only transferred" and you as the artist in the first person must initially invest "creative time" measured with "sweat equity" into the network and reinvest the "values" (Plexonian money) received for the initial work back into the network. You and each and every member keeps on reinvesting into the Web until such time as your work is demanded by the outside market and you decide to exchange (sell) it for hard currency (real money). At this point in time your work leaves the network and you give to Plexus a % of the hard currency. (Sometimes, there could be as many as three layers of commissions of % to be involved in this selling process). These commissions from the different entities involved will be in exchange for the value created by the network in launching your work. Plexus Art Bank, in Gorée, Dakar, will issue the Plexonian money in exchange of a 1% or 2% commission of its face value. One Plexonian will be equivalent to a hard currency. Plexus Black Bag, in Rome, is the marketing arm of the network and will receive a commission to be determined individually and when "works" are sold for hard currency through this arm. Plexus International Passport, in New York, is the newsletter of the network. In each issue, the newsletter will list works offered and sold including the list of their latest Plexonian value. This system will work like the "Bid/Ask System" used in all the counter financial markets. It is important to remember that between members you can only trade in Plexonians, no hard currency. Continuous trade between members is therefore always encouraged. Obviously any work will have ultimately a realistic chance to be sold in the outside market if it achieves a magical balance between inside and outside market dynamics. It is important to remember also that you as "the artist in the first person" do really and truly control the entire toy mechanism. Trades and contributions of sweat equity and creative time will also be printed in this newsletter.

Plexus International Storage, in Cagliari, Sardinia, will certify and document your work as true and original. It will act as a screening agent. Documents and works can periodically be used to organize shows and travelling exhibitions. In essence the Storage will act as a promotional tool to generate interest and value. These four bodies are the major pillars upon which this international network can be built. You can leave the network at any time. Just do not renew your membership and removed your work from the Storage and therefore from "Plexus Black Bag". You cannot however have back the value of your sweat equity contribution out of the network in Plexonian or in hard currency. You will leave it as your contribution to the network while you were member enjoying all benefits that such a membership brought to you.

Rolando Politi further in his *Plexus Art Cartel*, fully reported in Appendix A, describes how to organize the *Plexus Cartel* of artists in the first person through a Plexus network system to “put in direct contact sellers and buyers.”

...organize Plexus like a Club Card Carring. The Board is international, legalize it in Switzerland, Panama or Bahamas. Information is electronic (Hard copy optional) through an Art/Science Network Your Board invests into the frame, the cards, etc. Plexus Board is not-for profit, because you are fostering a science and culture co-operation network. In other words what it costs you to set the system is what you should ask for from a variety of “fund benefactors.” The Plexus Card Members must pay a fee - to gain access to the network. The artist in the First Person must make an investment just like investments are made in paper and pencils, but you must give them something better than Xerox copies and loose sheets. You will be successful in selling many plastic Plexus Cards, once you organize the information subjects for quick access. Now here is the Big Point. You as the Plexus Board must establish an international legal and copyright monitoring unit. The information should be accepted in the bank unless it is screened (copyright) and verified to be the true and original source of that specific artist/scientist in the first person. You will get the trust of the card members by establishing such a unit. Also if any work is sold as a result of the network, Plexus is entitled to a % of the profit (agreement to be signed before one becomes a card member). Also events staged as a result of Plexus Networking must have the Plexus name clearly in evidence. You don't want a fee for events because you are needed to generate sales and they may show profits or losses. But you are entitled to fee for sales of work by the artist in the first person. Your Network will put in direct contact sellers and buyers.

The insider Andrea Portas describes in his recollection, fully reported in Appendix A, how in Plexus while there is a convergence in social goals shared by participants, there are also many divergent individual positions.

I worked in these years to bring forward the idea of an art free from ties with the market, that it is concerned mainly to re-sew the tugs with the social tissue with which I shared Plexus goals, if often also I disagreed on some attitudes.

Andrea Portas further argues, as follows:

Plexus: Out of the Gallery. I have already mentioned to the relationship of open conflict that Plexus has brought forward against the selling system of the artworks (Art System). Plexus has often denied the dialogue with the artmarket in the attempt to find different strategies from those of the multinational art societies that mainly operate their choices on the basis of financial needs, secure like they are that the economic factor and of profit is of main importance in the world of visual arts too. To break these schemes the contemporary artist feels the need to look for an alternative audience different from that which usually attends the centers of power and of art consumption like public and private galleries, even if this may imply and implies the growing of economic problems and of maintenance for the artist himself. This way of acting which from some years is followed by different international artists, it is known as "Out of the Gallery" movement and it consists in the coherent choice to show the work of art in places not exactly in accordance with their fruition. Out of the Gallery, far away from the centers of power, art

may return to speak of themes of social interest and of popular involvement, it can start to breathe pure air, to live of its own light.

Plexus: Strategies for an Upcoming Future. The retrieval of these issues, without that these are resolved through cunning operations of apparent breakdown, the reopening of the borders of the group, the loyalty of purposes and the unity in the choices, are very important for the future of Plexus. Many times the decisions are made by few and this had made the detachment of many artists, who felt excluded and kept out. It will be important afterwards to re-sew the tugs made by too many interferences and intrusions by few who created confusion and little professionally, and above all the coherence of choices and purposes; it is necessary to arrive to the point in which the organization and the improvisation touch each other and they complete themselves in each other.

The Plexus concern of a free democratic exchange among artists and how it should be organized is clearly stated by the insider Luigi Mazzarelli in an open letter, partially reported in the Appendix A, addressed to the researcher as Plexus coordinator.

The hard experience of Thelema taught me that when a specific community of intellectuals and artists who sets, as essential support to their own relationships, a "freedom request," they must know to develop at the same time a balanced form of organization (or not organization) if they do not like to have painful experiences. It is not easy. From "the Manifesto of the Communist Party" of 1848 to the freedom requests of the student's cultural revolutions of 1968, the need of free human exchange, in the concreteness of its own historical development, repeated one thousand times under diverted directions the centrality of the patriarchal organization from which it tried to get free. There is a reason of course in this fatal repetition of the historical experience. Probably the need to channel creative energies of community members and to counterbalance together centrifugal pushes made up by libidinal impulses and or by individuals' power addressed unwarily to the ruin of the cohesion and of the collective projectuality of the community, it brings fatally to the opponent side. In other words a balanced form of coexistence between CENTRALITY and FREEDOM, from the point of the organizative view, does not have a satisfactory answer in history. This should let understand to have not too many illusions when this problem again shows itself: we know that also a non organization under any title shows up itself may generate monstrosity not less than a centralized organization. About this point it should be opportune to discuss for long time in the group, we should force ourselves to have a constant reference to our praxis to not allow ourselves to go out of the roads more or less by purely verbal suggestions contained inevitably in the hypothesis package of the departure. And nevertheless, there is no doubts, the request of freedom is an essential condition of how art poses itself and to which anyway it is necessary to give space. To re-propose with strength this need, Plexus is right.

The insider Alfa Diallo in his recollection, fully reported in Chapter IV, highlighted the collective vision of the African concept "*One on One*," and has pointed out that his poem *Presence Africain* was used as a statement for Plexus position. Both Alfa Diallo's poems are relevant in understanding Plexus community-based

positionament in Africa, within its symbolic setting in the Door of No Return of the House of the Slaves in the Island of Goree and in the Medina of Dakar.

The idea of “*One On One*” was always there in Africa. It is a collective vision. The understanding of this idea is the coming together 2 or more people and this is very important to be understood.

The Box poem of Alfa Diallo was placed on top of George Chaikin’s *Haddamard Matrix* blueprint at the entrance of the last *Plexus Black Box* event under inquiry in this study, held in 1993 at the NYU Rosenberg Gallery, as a statement of fighting for self-determination.

Don't you cry
Because they are killing
Our brothers and sisters
All you are expected to do is
Not give up the fight
You are the voice of
The living and the dead
See that
You carry on the fight
Can't you hear people cry
They want your help
You may spend
A life-time fighting for liberation
There is nothing you can do about that
No running away
Join the fight
Don't turn your back
Your forefathers died
Fighting for self-determination
Don't turn your back
Because this is your turn
Your time to get out of
The Box.

The active roles of the African artists in understanding “our living world” is pointed out by the insider Okechukwu Odita in his paper *Map of Knowledge-360°*, partially reported in Appendix A, in which he points out “the art as a sum total of human knowledge and experience.”

The main point of a future art historical knowledge is rather simple in essence yet profound in implications: art history to be practiced by professional academicians will occur within a contemporary art context—art historical knowledge tied to the study of contemporary artists rather than the Old Masters. By attempting to come to grips with contemporary basis of an art historians’ theories and activities, a study of practicing contemporary artists may lead to greater self-understanding. In this respect, the future art historical knowledge shares a goal similar to Aldous Huxley’s (*Brave New World*) attempt to develop a futuristic view of man.

In attempting to sketch the beginning of an art history of the 21st century, it is of value to consider the study of visual art within the framework of contemporary artists' activities, their visual sources as a profound human knowledge and experience, and their contributions through problem solving of current issues, to the development of contemporary history of art as a discipline. After setting forth a conceptual scheme, as afforded by a brief consideration of the contemporary artists, the case can be made for an art history of the 21st century. To give some credence to what is being advocated, three areas within the study of contemporary art will be considered for purposes of identifying some of the underlying art historical basis of the future: contemporary artists at work, the visual issues of their art, and the dissemination of the knowledge and experience of their activities through search, research and discovery.

African Artists' Roles. Traditional African art issues, such as those presented in the Map of Knowledge-360°, reveal what disputes the traditional artists have about their society. Also, the contemporary art issues, such as the ones identified in the MK-360°: item 20, are explicit of what the contemporary artists value as major issues of their time. These traditional and contemporary issues of African art would then provide a strong theoretical basis for the study of works of art. Since these issues are internal rather than external evidence of work of art, an art historical methodology finally evolves: that which discourages the investigation of art from external sources only. Rather it stresses the analysis of a work of art, first, to understand the issue and then work outwards with external sources to show the art as a sum total of human knowledge and experience. The identified issues in Oditá's Map of Knowledge-360° are therefore distinctive affirmations of African artists' active roles in the daily problems of their time as well as our living world.¹⁷⁸

Lucy Lippard, arguing against the false notion of democracy in art, claims that the elusive subject of multiculturalism is built from a Western theoretical point of view of art depending upon the notion of "Quality," which is used as "bludgeon" on the side of the homogeneity in power against the "so-called minorities that just haven't got it yet."

Ethnocentrism in the arts is balanced on a notion of Quality that "transcends boundaries" – and is identifiable only by those in power. According to this lofty view, racism has nothing to do with art; Quality will prevail; so-called minorities just haven't got it yet. The notion of Quality has been the most effective bludgeon on the side of homogeneity in the modernist and postmodernist periods, despite twenty-five years of attempted revisionism.

Art in the '90s no longer is operating in a context of order but rather in a context of disorder, Lippard further claims that it is a more difficult task for art critics and aestheticians to cross-culturally look at art.

The conventional notion of good taste with which many of us were raised and educated was based on an illusion of social order that is no longer possible (or desirable) to believe in. We now look at art within the context of disorder - a far more difficult task than following institutionalized regulations. Time and

¹⁷⁸ Okechukwu E. Oditá. *A Guide to Oditá's Map of Knowledge-360°, Study Research Practice on Traditional/Contemporary African Art*, p. 32-33, 1991.

again, artists of colour and women determined to revise the notion of Quality into something more open, with more integrity, have been fended off from the mainstream strongholds by this garlic-and-cross strategy. Time and again I have been asked, after lecturing about this material, "But you can't really think this is Quality?"¹⁷⁹

Open Social Ritual Multi-Arts Form: Plexus Art Co-Opera

Our performances, yours and mine,
Appropriate time and being
As a singular encounter.
Time gives presence,
And Immediacy,
Gliding on sensuous surfaces
Melds polarities into significances
Creating words never known before.
Presenting gives Time
By withdrawing it;
Unconcealment slips
Into the secrecy of silence.
We perform in our own arenas
Urgently aware of unawareness,
Promise is but the other side of nothingness--
Infinity's umbilical cord to Being
Severed by the incessant presenting of finitude.
We perform and the world becomes--
We are "the worlding of the world."¹⁸⁰

Performing arts are relevant in understanding Plexus art process but, as John Gilbert points out, to identify "performing arts" is a "ambiguous" task.

To be sure, 'performing arts' is an arbitrary and ambiguous category. Certainly within the structure of academia and other institutions such as Lincoln Center, the 'performing arts' have been given a certain identity based on some assumption that there is some common ground which links these very diverse media. The 'common ground' may be more one of economic survival rather than a compelling philosophic or aesthetic basis. If asked to identify the performing arts, we often respond by naming music, dance, and drama (or, as some insist, theatre), and then qualify these distinctions with such terms as musical theatre, opera, ballet, modern dance, etc. Such groupings although perhaps practical for certain institutional settings, hardly suffice in defining or identifying the 'performing arts.'.. Furthermore, 'performing arts' becomes even more ambiguous when this century has seen the development of "performance art," as a concern of a domain sometimes referred to as the visual or plastic arts.¹⁸¹

John Gilbert further points out:

The "working of the work" in the performing arts is extremely complex. It is complex because we have difficulty in resolving how a work exists apart from its performance (if, indeed, it does). However, the "working of the work" of

179 Lucy Lippard, *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America*, p. 7, 1990.

180 John Gilbert, *Qualitative Evaluation in the Arts*. Vol. 2., p. 61, 1984.

181 *Ibid.*, p. 62-63.

the work in a forming-through its medium in the continual presencing and withdrawing of the work. We experience the work in its dynamic disclosure which resonates in the resonance of a performance, we are sometimes stunned by the awesomeness of the experience.¹⁸²

The insider Giancarlo Schiaffini in his recollection, fully reported in Chapter IV, describes Plexus art form as a “summa” of different kinds of performing arts. Schiaffini describes *Plexus Black Box* as “an improvised container interconnecting what is inside with what is outside,” allowing further unknown links of any kind artistic nature, creating “a quite big interaction” among participants.

I worked with many different realities in the field of art and Plexus may be is one of the most complex, one of the most universal, in Plexus we find so many different kinds of performances of art, actions and exhibitions, which is important as a kind of summa of all works since the Living Theatre, Cage, all schools of improviser art. So we have Plexus, may be, as a big container, just in the sense of not a neutral container but of something which can contain several different artforms, performing arts, a container which is in relationship with what is contained and allows to cross, to link different realities, different musicians, performers, different facts, which may be never do otherwise. Plexus performances were so rich in interrelations among all elements playing and involved which was just not a collection of different form of art or players, with different languages, minds, and from different art fields and characters like painters, theatre players, musicians, singers, poets, dancers, videomen, but inside there was a big cohesion, a quite big interaction and relationship among participants, which was born there in the action and it was not planned from us in advance.

The insider Butch Morris in his recollection, fully reported in Chapter IV, describes his performing collaboration through which *Plexus art opera* came out as a new artform.

...which lead to my definition of *Plexus Black Box* as a multidisciplinary way for vary kind of artforms to work together and for different artists to collaborate together. My first performing association with Plexus was with *Goya's Time* in 1985 and during this process came out the theory of the art opera which characterized Plexus collaboration. It was characterized by multiplex levels of perspectives of the event and its particular surroundings open to be followed in all possible direction by the audience. The result became a cooperative art product of a collective imagination. Plexus artform was truly about understanding a particular moment in time and history. What was new in this artform is a significant individual collective art expression of different vision of the same idea as it was in *Goya's Time* presented by 23 visual artists. The artists working with each other were the big new artform in Plexus at the significant level of what they produced.

These multiplex levels of perspective were expressions of the presence in Plexus of numerous different individual experiences and many diverse geo-social cultural

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 70.

environments. The insider Maria Pia Marsala describes in her recollection, fully reported in Appendix A, the Plexus art process as an open fully interactive performing act, creating before, during, and after the event, new interactive materials for the next Plexus event.

Plexus was an occasion for an artistic experience of confrontation with the others participants, performing and acting human life, within the whole context of life. My participation was an improvisation performance in which I played with all my emotions and impressions in a stage within a closed space, aware of the Scheckner Theory on performance. It was difficult for me to express artistically, in an harmonic way, myself as an artist, as I had learned until that moment as dancer and actress. There was no stage direction, there was no support of any kind to help us, to express ourselves. On stage everybody, as artists in the first person, performed their own personalities as acting characters, often in conflicts with others' one, representing the complex theme "The Voyage in the Planet of Art" as an interaction of different human beings with different points of view. Fully interactive were our meetings, before and after the show, with everybody, journalists, artists, scientists, writers, curious, to discuss their and our opinions about how to arrive to "Pianeta Arte" as the only meaningful way to understand what we were doing there. We had several hard discussions and usual characteristics conflicts among all us, but these tensions created new energy, materials for interacting with that show, which we developed in the Plexus events performed in 1990 and in 1991, and since the recent ones.

Maria Pia Marsala further describes her experience with *Plexus Black Box* as made by performances of material, immaterial, and surrealistic elements.

I would like to recall as a meaningful part of my continuous experience with Plexus Black Box, from its opening performance in 1989, in Rome, at Metateatro, until to its closing in 1993, in New York, at the Rosenberg Gallery, that in Plexus there are not visible elements which oblige you/us to use intuition to feel them. Like for example, when in 1989 at Metateatro Plexus Black Box hold surreally a music note played by Giancarlo Schiaffini inside a container representing Plexus Black Box. Then, all of us moved through "la porta del cuore" (the door of the hearth) with the magic word: "I am" and by saying our own names. We ended that performance by a liberatory laugh presenting to the audience a Plexus Campbell Soup Can as an artwork.

The insider Stephen DiLauro describes in his paper *A Note about the Plexus Art Operas*, fully reported in Appendix A, Plexus art operas and their extremely low budget "about the equivalent of a Trappist monk's annual wages."

As a poet and showman nothing in my life to date brings such vivid and passionate recollections as the time of the Plexus art operas, "Goya Time," "Purgatorio," "Eve." Though the names of all the artists who contributed to these productions are listed within this volume, certain individuals participated in such a big way that I feel compelled to mention them here: Lawrence "Butch" Morris, il maestro; Gretta Safferty; Anita Steckel; Cowboy Ray Kelly, captain of the art slave ship; Miguel Algarin; Lenny Horowitz; Albert DiMartino; David Boyle; Joe Strand; Paolo Buggiani; Willoughby Sharp; and Sandro Dernini, art director extraordinaire. I have seen tempers flare, heard voices raised watched lust blossom and fade, enjoyed outstanding music,

observed brilliant bursts of energy and artistic achievement and enjoyed the finished product - spectacles that are unique in the history of opera. One of the most amazing aspects of these operas is the extremely low budget on which they were produced. That such bursts of creative output were underwritten by a budget about the equivalent of a Trappist monk's annual wages attests to the dedication everyone involved brought to bear.

Stephen DiLauro as the Plexus dramaturge further describes in *The Closing of Plexus Black Box*, fully reported in Appendix A, the level of creativity made by a variety of participants that characterized Plexus *art operas* and *art co-operas*.

Nothing as vibrant as these shows has ever been mounted before or since. Costumed players, orchestras, choral groups, singers, performance artists, ballets and visual artists all came together to celebrate freedom of communication. As the Plexus dramaturge and impresario, I was repeatedly amazed at the levels of creativity and energy that went into these shows. Exploring myth and history through artistic interpretation brought to life the theories of Antonin Artaud in a manner that perhaps even he never envisioned. Plexus art operas, or art co-operas as some called them, had a way of making the artists involved reach beyond themselves. The creation of a new form of expression required art slaves who would execute these art operas regardless of market considerations.

In Plexus *art operas* as well as in *art co-operas* hundreds of artists gather together to perform a theme in which dance, theatre, musical performance and visual arts were all combined together in a new emerging art form, *the art opera*, as Stephen DiLauro argues in his paper *Plexus Opera*, fully reported in Appendix A.

What is Plexus? This is a question I am often asked. The answer evolves as Plexus itself evolves. The "official" answer, as put forth by Dr. Sandro Dernini, founder of Plexus International, is that "Plexus is an international cartel of independent producers working in the first person." Be that as it may, Plexus at time has appeared to some observers to be no more than a series of opportunities for group photos. For me, though, Plexus is beautiful chaos from which new names, new faces, and a new art form is emerging - the art opera. These performance spectacles are, perhaps without originally intending to be, the realization of Antonin Artaud's theories for a Theatre of Cruelty - a theatre in which masks, dance, music and shamanistic ritual take precedence over "text."

The insider Franco Meloni in his recollection, fully reported in Appendix A, points out how in Plexus "the scripts weren't always respected" and how to deal with the game of defining *Plexus Black Box* it is necessary to shift from one single point view to a fleet of horizons.

PLEXUS had the useful characteristics for a research with joyful aspects. We played without well knowing which the stakes were, and there always are. We had to look for personifications to be followed in order to cover a role.

The scripts weren't always respected. The subject was fleetingly indefinite. The scientific matrix was proved by many rationality peaks. Acting in history - either capital or small letter - we could feel the possible implications. The different potential openings regarded problems thought in solitude but discussed between many. And all of this, unavoidably, seen with eyes more and more tired of human errors. We needed greater synthesis efforts in order to define PLEXUS. Art and Science was not enough, Freedom was imperfectly vague, Artist "in the first person" made one think at barren personalism, Antilibretto brought back necessarily to previous experiments. But the accidental or wanted interaction with others forced to change the relations with the outside, or the inside, that regarded us. The solicitations were strong, but had to be supported both by a credibility and by a continued research of transforming stimulus. "Now the game was seen from the inside. In the series of fleeting focalizations of Plexus, it seemed necessary a further definition of one's own outlook on the problem. Having necessarily to put together scientific concepts with Art images, it seemed inevitable to run back to the one period of human history about which judgements agree on estimation of values: the Renaissance. It was possible because of the genetic connections to identify in the problem of the Flagellation paving reconstruction a way to deal, in an apparently operative way, with the combination of different cultures. Not being enough Piero, we wanted further on to represent one's vision of the problem with a kind of stamp what would define PLEXUS once for all:
kB In W. The operation seemed completed, the explanation left to others."

Franco Meloni further argues about the impossibility of defining Plexus because of its open structure.

The definitions are always incomplete. To imply in equations concepts that regard multiple interactions requires an ability of synthesis, and a comprehension that usually is out of the normal experiences. Physics teaches that simplicity, refinement and wealth of some formulas causes an almost sensual pleasure in dimly seeing the route that had determined its concise completeness. It would be as looking at a river's mouth, while going up the water-course to the source and seeing the reflection of every single wave. The problems are always very complex and it demonstrates a human but not always verified need, wanting to delimitate them in enclosures rationally or schematically defined. Plexus is consequently hardly definable. The interaction is complicated by the presence of necessary and fundamental human factors. If it is difficult to give order to the atoms, it is incredibly more complex to deal with feelings. And Plexus is full of these. It is impossible to analyse it from the inside. The position in the scenery requires that a physicist - after all a man of science - expresses itself according to schemes that the others are expecting from him. In this situation, forced to explain tangibly my role, I had necessarily to give the clearest possible idea of the reason why I was interested in PLEXUS and above all the way I thought about it. Avoiding an abused broadcast-fascinating language, I thought that entropy could be used: an image-creating-image happily used many times in physics. Once more a concept apparently known is used to introduce the problem. Like other times entropy is useful to lead the way to reasoning that will later develop along routes before unforeseeable. Then in a particular scenery - and here the explanations would get entangled in skeins of the previous experiences - we enunciate the equality between a thermodynamically important quantity - a real solid bridge between the microscopic and the macroscopic - and a movement that involves different competencies and interests. Very nice picture. But unsatisfactory. For many reasons: because the definition is good for closed systems; because the molecules don't think

and people do; because it is impossible to measure the thermodynamic probability of a dynamic system with a variable density outside a laboratory. But, even if the formula is not true, it is interesting to see its limits and the possible alterations, or only the criticism. The system is not closed, and it would be absurd if it was....The metastructures refer to the research of new box opening combinations connected tighter and tighter in a continuous research that finds its reason from the same existence of complexity. But it is true, and I believe so, that the most important thing is the way and not the goal, the discussion of formulas, of codification, of definitions, is after all more important than the subject of the research itself. The Art & Science does not exist, but it is fundamental to talk about it. Plexus is a box, more or less big, contained in another one distinguished with difficulty from it. Nobody knows its exact dimension, but it is possible that his entropy, and his energy also, is potentially very big. The connections are more important of the content. PLEXUS as entropy and therefore as information. Piero della Francesca as the vision of the Global Man.

The insider Frans Evers describes in his recollection, fully reported in Appendix A, his experience in Rome and the complex social art context in which Plexus was placed.

I have a very good memory of the Metatheatre because there was a very vibrant atmosphere which showed that there was an audience for this which really became very interested to learn what it was all about. I remember Sandro giving a speech about the painter explaining about his painting and some other people commenting on his work and there I gave this contribution about the Berlin Wall and the colours coming off and the sound of this very strange double iconoclastic process as I described it. I was very intrigued that such a quite complicated but very realistic social story because this only had happened a few months before was so good to communicate with the Italian audience who had gathered there and that, for me, gave the kind of rewards that there is in a much larger field a new awareness of aesthetics arising in which the arts are related in one way or other to what's happening socially and the social dynamics are so enormous nowadays that you hardly are aware of the intensity. That we will only see when things are slowing down again and become freezing which maybe happen in a number of years but I expect that this kind of dynamic probably still goes on for another ten or fifteen years at least. So we don't know in what processes we are involved. Therefore I found it very interesting to be faced with Plexus which was one of the few art forms still wanting to try to make visible one of the waves in the ocean of Willem.

The insider Lorenzo Pace in his recollection, fully reported in Appendix A, describes *Plexus Black Box* as a “philosophical concept” that brings many people together, with different backgrounds, with no need to understand fully its contents.

I never understood the concept but I knew that it was right and he was inspired to participate in Plexus which relates people with other ethnic background all together. When we went in Sardinia in 1987, we were more than 200 artists and scientists from all over the world and from all arts fields, with different views. It was a great and complex experience. It was my first time that I was in Sardinia and I was fascinated by that its nature, its history and culture. Plexus is a vary experience made in many different spaces and times during the last ten years. Plexus was able to bring so many people with different political vision to reflect together upon the impact of Columbus on

the Americans as an issue of reconciliation among all of us as human beings and not only as an issue of conflict. Plexus was able to create multilayer communication links among artists with different backgrounds. "Plexus Black Box" is a philosophical concept in which I feel to be related with the others Plexus artists without to understand fully its real contents, because it is not so important to understand everything but to feel positive about it and to go for it and through it. My experience about Plexus, made in ten years, allows myself to say that I know that everything that does not make sense, beyond the scene, later goes in focus. It is not necessary for an artist to have everything in a logical sequential form, but to feel good about and to have fun. But Plexus, also in formal sense as for example in the event made with Franco Meloni at the University of Cagliari, was able to accomplish also more structured institutional expectations. Plexus art events were able to make sense from no sense.

The insider Ray Kelly, inspired by Bucky Fuller, argues in his recollection, fully reported in Appendix A, that art is a way of life, "air without wires," "liquid forms vs. square lines."

We have to go into nature, to work in different areas behind abstract structures in painting, in sculpture, in architecture, in times and future spaces. Bucky Fuller inspired me by putting together art and science forms in packaging structures, with energy, with language. Art is a way of life, it is a way of understanding. Art is something else from money, and from what bullshit is presented usually. Art is the future which can't be controlled. It is in the air without wires. Art is free. The artists are part of the structure which the power system is trying to push out. Liquid forms vs. square lines.

The David Ecker as an "insider" in his recollection, fully reported in Appendix A, by recalling Charles Ives's describes *Plexus Black Box* as made by fragments and contingencies.

If you look at Plexus Black Box you have fragments and segments something like Ives's piece. But the expectation they made up creates a whole of all, a total. Expectation in postmodern thought is full projections of how the things are in the world and it is very close to everyday life which is made up of fragments and contingencies. This is Plexus and it is only about contingencies, not planned, but incidental. It looks like total confusion from an outsider view but it is not, and one thing is related to the other one and there is so much energy that every thing gets done spontaneously. Social chaos is fairly typical event of Plexus, made up of acts and gestures performed by distinguished and not distinguished artists and scientists, depending upon the circumstances under which they perform.

For David Ecker "art is the ability to transcend a time-space, a place, and literally makes a ritual that which reinforces the value and beliefs of the group." This ritual reinforcement process in Plexus art opera is described by the insider Barnaby Ruhe in his paper *Plexus*, fully reported in Appendix A, as an evolving art action.

Plexus is the shaman journey along the lines of Van Gennep's Rites of Passage's format. That is, the Plexus art opera is an evolving art action that

engages in three distinct phases: the first phases the identification and dialogue with the Norm or status quo, embracing the system of art logic even as the embrace is deadly. The second phase is the “dematerialization” of our constellation of concepts surrounding art activity; this phase is what Victor Turner calls the “liminal” phase where roles reverse, definitions are tossed back into the air, confusion reigns around blazing ambiguities functioning like a Rorschach blot, and artists dive in with no clear functions delineated. At first the second phase seems like just so much nonsense, like acts of desperation. The third phase is the rematerialization around the Plexus metaphor. Like a pearl formed around an irritating grain of sand, Plexus sets up a metaphor that engages art activity without precise directives. You have to be there: Artists congregate because of a sensed “communitas” and mill about when the directives are clearly unclear. At some undetermined moment, the mob coheres into congruity.

The concept of “*communitas*,” pointed out by Barnaby Ruhe as part of the Plexus community-based art process, is clarified by Victor Turner in *The Anthropology of Performance*.

Extreme individualism only understands a part of man. Extreme collectivism only understands man as a part. *Communitas* is the implicit law of wholeness arising out of relations between totalities. But *communitas* is intrinsically dynamic, never quite being realized. It is not being realized precisely because individuals and collectivities try to impose their cognitive schemata on one another. The process of striving toward and resistance against the fulfilment of the natural law of *communitas* necessitates that the unit of history and of anthropology (which takes into account the sociocultural schemata) and also the unit of their analysis is drama, not culture or archive. And certainly not structural relationship. Structure is always ancillary to, dependent on, secreted from process. And performances, particularly dramatic performances, are the manifestations par excellence of human social process.¹⁸³

The insider George Chaikin describes in his recollection, fully reported in Appendix A, the ritual role performed by the documentation in *Plexus Black Box* as a unifying element in reinforcing collective participation.

What is the Plexus Black Box and what it is function? Ritual is very important in the understanding of it by giving continuity and connecting one activity to another one. Initially I did not like ritual but after I participated more in these activities I understood that the ritual of documentation became significant part of Plexus by keeping in it the life of the community and bringing people together. The ritual activities of the documentation became a form of collective joint participation in which each one gave up something in order to share in a global participation which turned to become a contemporary art form. These ritual activities of Plexus Black Box which easily could be characterized as chaotic activities turned into a kind of art form which ended by also documenting the unity and coherence of all this chaos. Plexus Black Box became in the end the unifying element of a collective participation in which the photo of that moment was the key ritual element of a documentation for Plexus own history.

¹⁸³ Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance*, p. 84, 1986.

George Chaikin further describes in his recollection *Plexus Black Box* process as a democratic collaborative art form, shifting, in time and space, in a non linear and non rational way, with no hierarchic structure.

It is difficult for collaborative art group endeavours to have space in old traditional exhibitions where only one person get usually credit as the creator. Recently there is a move toward more democratic forms where all people are participating in the making decisions process. My feeling of "Plexus Black Box" is that there is a continuous shift of what is in the box and why. I believe that its relevance was more related with whom in that moment was participating and from the circumstances. My participation was made not under any hierarchy, because it switches always in time and space....

I participated without understanding what I was doing with the belief that others were understanding. Over years, as the process recurs, in retrospect, I begun to understand what was happening. Sometime I did not know what and why something was happening but, later on, it made sense. The Plexus process is a not linear activity and less rationale, which the coherence appears only after the fact. After my experience over the years I know that there is not a need to get every "i" dotted and cross every "t" in terms of understanding it. and you will understand it only after you let yourself participating into it. This is because you will understand it only after you let yourself participate in it. In Plexus the question of the balance between leadership and democracy was not relevant, and I believe myself to be a profoundly democratic person. I believe also that Plexus is a coherent democratic structure because it has not a hierarchic structure. Sandro covers his role of orchestrating it on a basis of a democratic participation. Everybody has his/her own point view and with different art forms in which not everybody is interested in it.

Within *Plexus Black Box*, the ritual of art allowed experiences overcoming separation among participants with different backgrounds and allowed them to come together crossing different disciplines and cultures, without exactly knowing for what they were going together, as Hans-Georg Gadamer argues.

Furthermore, it is a community in which we are gathered together for something, although no one can say exactly for what it is that we have come together. It is no accident that this experience resembles that of art, since celebration has its own specific kinds of representation.¹⁸⁴

The insider Miguel Algarin in his recollection, fully reported in Chapter IV, described the volume of the free artists' participation in Plexus group shots events, not planned in advance, as the aesthetic image of Plexus *art operas* and *art co-operas*.

The aesthetic image of Plexus is the volume of the artists' free participation in mass events such as the group shots in which a hundred artists gathered together in the middle of East Sixth Street just for a photo. The occasion in Plexus is the aesthetic sense, making an occasion into a happening and reflecting on that for its historical value. This is what I saw in Plexus, it plans its

¹⁸⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, p. 40, 1986.

own historical value. The art operas were occasions where an enormous amount of work was made to collect a huge quantity of players together and then the event either works or does not work. When it works, we all contribute to an idea which is itself in the making not made but "making." In that way the value of the aesthetics of Plexus is creating artistic concepts that hit emotions.

The concept of co-opera is described by the insider Rolando Politi as interaction of two or more artists in the first person.

Coopera concept: Artists in the first person create art works and mail them cross continents to other artists for their interventions. Interactions of two or more interventions create a coopera and can be created globally...At some point when the music stops... the originals are collected in one location for exhibition and then the exhibit travels linking all participating artists across continents....

The insider Arturo Lindsay in his report, from Plexus Black Box round table, held in Rome in 1990, fully reported in Appendix A, describes in Plexus art process the formation of a "plexus."

ART PLEXUS The communication which takes place between two or more artists form what is called a *Plexus*. Sometimes a *Plexus* is formed by the primary branch (*Sandro*) - as a *Co-Opera*, a *Purgatorio Show*, or a *Christopher Columbus Project* - and occasionally by *local Plexuses*, as in the plexuses formed in *Amsterdam, Dakar, New York, Rome, Sardinia, Milano*, and soon *Atlanta*. In the formation of a plexus the component *artists* divide, then join, and again subdivide in such a complex manner that the individual *events* become interlaced most intricately, so that each branch leaving a plexus may contain filaments from each of the primary *aesthetic* trunks which form it. In the formation also of a smaller plexuses at the periphery of the body there is a free interchange of *artists*. In each case, however, the individual *artist* remains separate and distinct, *maintaining his/her own identity*, and do *not* inoculate with one another, *losing their individuality*.

In Plexus events, conceptualized since 1986 as global art events, the art form of the *Plexus art opera* evolved, through *Plexus compressionist process*, into the format of the *Plexus art co-opera*. *Plexus artopera* was conceived as a multi arts format based upon an improvised interaction of many art forms, made by a conducted improvisation, through a modular construction process, following a "*libretto*" made by one or more authors. Instead, *Plexus art co-opera* was developed as a multi arts format based upon *Plexus compressionist art process*, upon a modular construction process of individual art contributions converging into a collective "*antilibretto*," mutually made by collective understandings, imaginations and emotions.

Plexus Compressionist Art Process

What you feel and see is your own creation. We have created a new interactive art movement. We are called PLEXUS. I am labelling it: "Mytho-Compressionism."

This book represents, in a flat compressed version, the hopes, visions, poetry, music, dreams of hundreds of artists. This book represents a small scale version, a special history of four operas. These Co-Operas were and are the personal visions of Art History, of Francisco Goya, of Purgatory, of Mythology trance-formed into a simultaneous Tableau. Here, we have compressed history, re-created mythology. Time has speed up and there is no time left for aesthetic distance between the artist as performer and the Art Observer. In these simultaneous Co-Operas we have destroyed this distance, and they in turn interact, creating a new operatic form. We have extended the compass of vision to include the former observer as participant. We are user friendly. Use us or lose us. We are all independent thinker and dreamer collating our collective visions collaboratively. Please experience us wisely and with an open heart. This is open ART.

This quote by the insider Leonard Horowitz, from his paper *Introduction to Plexus: Recall 1, Passport for Purgatorio*, reported in Appendix A, is relevant to understand *Plexus Black Box* "compressionist" art process, compressing Plexus past, present and future. This Plexus process of interactive compression and expansion of time was conceptualized by Lenny Horowitz in his paper *Compressionism*, fully reported in Appendix A.

I first experienced 'compressionisme' in the Spring of 1985, where I was suddenly engulfed by a "Total Theatre" environmental spectacular Opera called "Goya Time," a continuous and extremely compressed dramatization of three paintings by Francisco Goya: "The Nude Maja," "The Royal Family," and "The Eight of May." This avant garde "Co-opera" was conceived, produced and directed by Dr. Sandro Dernini, an accomplished biologist from the island of Sardinia, in collaboration with Gretta Safarty and Lawrence "Butch" Morris. By dramatizing these three Goya painting and having this cast of Goya costumed artists literally run through the audience, it destroyed the normal sense of separation of staged theatre, since all at once you were not only the observer, but a participant. In order to really catch the total and unexpected actions taking place, one had to constantly shift one's view from the Royal family on the balcony and further physically follow their descent through the amazed milling crowd below. The Royal Family pushed their way through the packed gymnasium, past thirty artists doing their simultaneous versions of the Nude Maja, and brushed past me, almost knocking me down. The whole spectacle was tied together and totally reified by modular music created and conducted and orchestrated by Butch Morris and further amplified by the dancing of Gloria McLean and company. The whole Opera lasted an hour chronologicallybut...psychologically seemed to be over in ten minutes. So we can say that because of the concept and the simulsensuous presentation, that there was an intense compression of time, of events, of experience, of total unexpectedness... If we have been subconsciously influenced by the motion picture (and now television), as I believe we all are, then the obvious differences between the Plexus process and especially any of Wilsons masterpieces (Einstein on the Beach) is that Robert Wilson's oeuvre has a strong sense of slowed motion and Plexus has the quality of Pixillation,

of jump cut, of extreme compression. A Polish mathematician, Klaus Wyborny, working in Hamburg, Germany, a number of years ago (and using a timing device on his camera), automatically pixillated frames from Citizen Kane and compressed this famous film into three minutes! The result is a very short film that compresses the images to the extent that the people disappear and the images are transformed into an atomic type mushroom cloud with a peculiar black dot that seems like an insect flying in and out of the cloud. This is a transformation of the original classic into a totally abstract process and sculptural vision. And that has been the Plexus process, whether we have dealt with the theme of Dante's Purgatorio, with the symbolic universal Serpent and with Eve in the Garden of Eden.

For Lenny Horowitz, *Plexus Compressionism Process* is "a quick shorthand, is jazz compressed in a magic music art form, is no time to move, is a nanosecond, is one plus one equals three, is speed up time, is a creative process, is Plexus process, is a computer chip, is a critical mass, is yang no ying. He further describes *Plexus compressionism process* in a note to David Ecker, fully reported in Appendix A.

Compressionism is caused by time speeded up in our unconsciousness. We are constantly compressing and fusing new forms, larger yet more complex forms from old ones. Modern art fuses the conscious with the unconscious so impression plus reification plus process are added to the dynamics of art. It is a new fused form. Picasso, using this new form fused the past with the present. We now have so much information that we are compressing it digitally into tiny computer chips capable of scoring billions of bits of info on a tiny compressed chip. All art forms are compressions, in that they use a unique shorthand to arrive at their metaforms. A 4 line haiku can express eternity. One plus one equals three. The plexus process is to combine, fuse these art forms. So we are fusing fusions, compressing compressions into a larger, more complex, more powerful network.

The insider David Boyle points out in his recollection, fully reported in Chapter IV, how the compressionism process originated in Plexus as a new art form, "where documentation stops and art begins."

Plexus as an art movement contributed to the integration of different uses of art media in new art forms, actively extending the point where documentation stops and art begins. As in the case of the Plexus tradition to make photos called group shots which turned into an art form. It was Leonard Horowitz who pioneered this Plexus compressionist use of the photo of the photo. In each event, Plexus members assembled together for large photos, like family picnic photos. Groups of Plexus artists answering the open call were photographed together. These "group shots" became bigger and bigger. By 1988 Plexus artists were intentionally holding up the photos of the previous group shots while creating new group shots. These photos were then brought to subsequent group shots achieving the effect a group of people holding a group shot which was holding a group shot and so on. Producing the effect of compressing into one photo content with a lens could be amplified again.

Plexus artists compressed within *Plexus Black Box* numerous accounts of their artistic processes as well as they performed internalization of Plexus records and

relics into the formal structure of their art works. Plexus *compressionistic* art process of “photos of the photos in the photos of previous events in which there were other photos in the photos, etc.,” is described by the insider Lynne Kanter in her recollection, reported in Chapter IV, as the seed process through which Plexus art altar installations and ritual art performances developed as new works of art.

The “*internalization*” of the document into the work of art accomplished by conceptualist artists, through the use of photography as a “memory device” to carry information related to the overall social cultural context of the artwork, is pointed out by Robert C. Morgan in *Conceptual Art. An American Perspective*.

The problems of documentation in Conceptual Art cannot be solved simply by understanding how they exist as primary information. Often a document will stand as a reference to something other than itself. A photograph, for example, may exist solely on a referential level without any aesthetic value of its own. The referent becomes the idea, core or nexus of the piece-not encapsulated by any regard for material “permanence.” Another type of document may exist not solely for its referential value but for its component value as well. In this case, the document exists within the context of a particular semiotic system.¹⁸⁵

Robert Morgan further points out the significance of theoretical statements by conceptualist artists.

Rather than presenting the viewer with an object or series of objects to contemplate in terms of formal-visual structure, the conceptualist presented statements to be read usually accompanied by various documents which were intended as supportive evidence within some idea-based schema or system. Given this approach, it could be said that the negation of the art object was an attempt to bring the raw material of everyday life back into the context of the art experience.¹⁸⁶

The insider Anna Saba has internalized Plexus documentation and relics into new works of art, encompassing large quantity of quotations of quotations as well as metaphors related to Plexus history, as she points out in her recollection, fully reported in Appendix A.

In the Plexus movement I used many kinds of materials. Plexus helped me to look at different species of artistic activities. The use of the metaphor was the best tool to overcome the limits due to different languages. And this refers not only to the etymological sense of the word. I gave my contribution to the visibility of Plexus with many works dedicated to the documentation of the various phases of the trail of the multimedia movement. Presently, the seven

¹⁸⁵ Robert C. Morgan, *Conceptual Art. An American Perspective*, p. 44-45, 1994.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

(and here too the metaphor is present) sculptures - books draw a part of the common history.

Plexus photos of photos in other photos performed within Plexus events to be documented as works of art were conceived as quotations of quotations of other Plexus quotations are relevant components in understanding Plexus *compressionist* art process as direct quotes of it, as Nelson Goodman argues in *Ways of Worldmaking*.

Then a photograph may actually contain a duplicate of a second photograph; and the first, if it also refers to the second through showing it as in a frame, etc., might then be said to quote it directly.¹⁸⁷

The re-opening of *Plexus Black Box* allowed the increase of the resonance of the Plexus *compressionist* process, generating more vitality, strength and resistance for emerging individual identities, within Plexus network, and, at the same time, producing new creative energies through a "modular construction," as it is described, as follows, the insider Willem Brugman in his recollection of fully reported in Chapter IV.

A modular construction, as it happened to take place in the art cooperas, there were so many different individuals coming from many different fields and specialties that had to be organized in time and space, and they had to be organized also in a story telling way so a modular construction is an organizational principle by which every fragment, every subject, every object that takes part in the total generic energy explosion and is guaranteed its own identity. I maybe can only say it in a more poetic or esoteric sense, if a drop of water joins the ocean, it does not loose its characteristics. This is the principal of modular construction whatever effort or excess energy spent in the process will find its constructive expression of possibilities in the overall work. Well, a modular construction is a facilitating process that allows the individual energies to pass through and to gather a purity of energy which maybe can be approached by talking about light.

Modular construction allowed Plexus *compressionist* art process to operate by assuring respect for each individual artist identity. The insider Frans Evers describes further in his recollection, fully reported in Appendix A, how modular construction allows a multi-cultural perspective, with no dominant view, and acknowledges all different individual participant identities, within a concept of "total theatre" as well as of "total energy."

Modular construction starts with an acknowledgment of all the elements that are involved in a process, very detailed, very specific acknowledgment. If I am allowed to use the metaphor of cooking here...when you start cooking

¹⁸⁷ Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, p. 48, 1978.

you will go into the kitchen and you need a stove you might need an oven you need a light you need gas or you need wood. Then you have to get the ingredients that you will start cooking with, and then you have to get your pots and pans you have to get spoons and so forth. And, within the analogy of the kitchen, you can say the modular construction starts with the preparation of all the different ingredients that you need. In our case, and today that hasn't changed much the modular construction takes place in liminal space: in a space which is in between- because we don't own this space. We actually don't even hire this space- we use this space for a limited time. So - I've made a metaphor about cooking- about the kitchen- the acknowledgment of all the different ingredients now, the next thing that is more than ever important, when you look at modular construction from a multi cultural perspective- it means that whatever the contribution is going to be from whatever perspective its coming no perspective can be dominant...all the perspectives have to exist simultaneously. So modular construction, now in the 90's also involves synthesis of all the different ingredients and also involves synchronicity. I think that what has happened in the past ten years is that a modular construction is now more than ever possible to understand if you use the concept of synesthesia....that all the senses , together, create an extra sense experience and this is the objective of a modular construction....that if you put all these different layers together, in a transparent way by which you superimpose them on top of one another so that space and time gets shared by all the individuals so that the individual does not loose its characteristics, but joins larger energy fields. My particular interest is that modular constructions work on a psychic plane of peoples. So these collaborations take place under modular construction brings us in a way back to concepts of total theatre- to concepts of total energy- or to "Gesamtkunstwerk" which is a concept that is borrowed from music theater- perhaps especially Wagner- but other people were active in that as well. So the modular construction has gone into any space and any time.

Plexus compressionist process, through modular construction, created a complex community-based art environment in which particular and general components, individual identities and communities issues were represented and compressed together, within "One plus One" synergetic perception of the historical Plexus whole reality, as the insider Sandro Dernini argues in his paper *Sgusi Quanto Costa Plexus?* (I beg your pardon, how much cost Plexus?)

One plus One equals Two. This does not apply to Plexus. In Plexus One plus One are synergetic and they create a causal interaction producing an additional value. Plexus is synergetic, it is living matter. But this is another story, look at "Physics of the Matter," "Aesthetics," and "Cybernetics." One plus One equals History of Art, which Art? Plexus Art! How the value of an art work is made? The cultural value is given by a basic economic law of demand and supply. The exchange value is modified by speculative operations of collectors and dealers who invest on that particular artist or, better, art movement. It gives more speculative opportunities in order to swell up the exchange of prices. "Il Cambio di Rotta" (The Change of Route) for Plexus could be to sum its cultural value with a new exchange value. For example, through limited editions of art works, "Plexus Money," "Plexus Stamps," "Plexus Certified Checks." For such purpose it is necessary to switch the exchange route with the market. Instead to be collectors and dealers to speculate on artists, Plexus should choose and invest on collectors and dealers like Franco Girina, who in the first person historically believed in Plexus without speculations, in order then that they will turn to the

market their additional values, made artificially - scientifically. How much is the value today of the art works given in 1987 to the collector Girina as value exchange to print the "Passport for Plexus Serpent"? Surely more than before. One plus One equals History and to the establishment of a credit line for the International Art Community of Plexus.

Against the Slavery of Art "Isms"

Plexus, like other avant-garde historical art movements, has taken position against the trend of "isms" in modern and postmodern art history, but its unique provocative non Western move was to shift its artistic focus from the New York Artworld to the House of the Slaves of Goree, off Dakar, declared historical landmark by UNESCO, to locate symbolically a new *World Art Bank*, produced directly by the artists as independent producers.

It was conceptualized as a statement against the slavery of art from the artmarket as well as a change of route toward a new geography of art. By setting its own art stage outside the Western Artworld, Plexus international strategic move was to identify the *Door of No Return* of the House of the Slaves in Goree as its symbolic historical site from where to start a *Repatriation of Art into the Community*, passing through the bronze age Nuraghic Mediterranean culture of Sardinia and the European political cultural context of Italy of the '70s. Since 1988, the Door of No Return of the House of the Slaves became the symbolical site to renegotiate a new contract of art aesthetic, and ethical stage from where Plexus is performing its community-based artist identification claim as a challenge against the notion that the artistic identification is conferred to the artist only by the Artworld. Therefore, thus situated within the modern and postmodern debate, Plexus is challenging the hierarchical Western notion of *Artworld*.

In the Lower East Side community of New York City, Plexus staged in 1986 the artopera *Eve* in which hundreds artists together performed the escaping of a metaphoric art slaves ship from the Artworld control. It was a statement for sweat equity, as the insider Lenny Horowitz stated in the *Eve's* presentation, full text reported in Appendix A.

....Eve takes place on a mythological art slaves ship and is performed by more than 200 contemporary artists handcuffed together in an journey between reality and fantasy ending when.... Eve sits between Adam and God in the Sistine Chapel....The Marlboro robot arrives with the key words: 99 cents for a 200 artists Art Opera created and produced by all the artists together to establish an international art Community Credit Line and to establish SWEAT EQUITYNext fall the art slaves shuttle ship will cross the international sea to arrive in the bronze age of Sardinia in the summer 1987.

In 1987, Plexus art slaves ship, travelling through reality and mythology, landed in the Nuraghic culture of Sardinia, where in the megalithic sanctuary of Sa Itria, near Gavoi, it was staged the art coopera *Il Serpente di Pietra* (The Serpent of Stone), performed by 160 artists and presented as the first international art slaves market show made in contemporary history, conceived as a "challenge-game-show" on the Artworld's star system, as it is described by the insider Sandro Dernini in his paper *The Artist in the First Person*, fully reported in Appendix A.

160 artists of 23 different nationalities, that on July 4, 1987 arrived in the sanctuary of Sa Itria in Sardinia, were the real protagonists 'in the first person' of Plexus art co-opera n° 4, *Il Serpente di Pietra*. This event was organized as the first international art slaves market show, produced and managed by the artist in the first person. It took form in the confrontation, collision, encounter between all players of this Plexus 'challenge-game-show' on the star system of the art market. It was played by two teams mainly: A) the co-authors of 'the anti-libretto' for an art co-opera, made as a unitary and compressed presentation of the synchronized collective deconstruction of the serpent. B) The authors of 'the libretto' for an art opera as a modular and selective construction of individual art-works. The stake was the apple of the art star system. The supreme judge was the Serpent. In the atelier des arts that came first and built *Il Serpente di Pietra* Plexus interacted with the time-space of Sa Itria, a megalithic sanctuary, ten miles far from Gavoi (a small village at the center of the island of Sardinia, Italy), and with the times-spaces of the 160 artists speaking different languages and codes.

The artist in the first person became the absolute winner of this Plexus game, playing as slave and working as artist, free indeed to express itself without curators, mediators and critics.

Sadie Plant in *The Most Radical Gesture. The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age* describes the European political and cultural context in the '70s and in the '80s, after the French students' revolt in 1968, and the Italian Red Brigades in the '70s. Sadie Plant connects together all the XX Century's avant-garde art movements, by having in common the same need of freedom, to be in charge of their identity, destiny, and history, therefore they were very concerned with their own definitions, as Plant argues.

The situationists adopted some aspects of the forms of organization developed by their avant-garde predecessors. Together with the internationalism and eclecticism of Dada, the internal discipline exercised by the surrealists was carried into the SI where it served the primary purpose of constituting a group in control of its own destiny, a movement impossible to define in terms other than its own. The SI resisted all attempt to institutionalise its theory as an ideological "ism", and insisted that the group should have nothing in common with the hierarchical power, no matter what form it may take.¹⁸⁸

The '70s Italian historical avant-garde background of Plexus from the cultural slave market show, held in Rome, in 1979, by the L.I.A.C.A. to defend the cultural freedom of expression in Italy, is relevant to understand how, in the '80s, Plexus Art Slavery Manifesto. originated from an Italian-European avant-garde cultural heritage. After, it struggled within each specific geo-political historical context/environment in which Plexus took roots.

In the '80s, from the *Door of No Return* of the House of the Slaves of Goree, Plexus started to stress out the risk for artists by accepting the existing Artworld to become slaves of its hierarchic star system, made by theories, Isms, labels, categories, and definitions, expressions of its Western identification of "art."

The Plexus provocative symbolic association of the tragic slavery history with the art market exploitation was initially strongly criticized inside Plexus through an *Open Call*, published in *Plexus Newsletter*, fully reported in Appendix A, and signed by Frank Shifreen, Lorenzo Pace, Larry Stanley, Hope Carr, Joi Huckaby, as members of the board of directors of Plexus International Art Urban Forum inc.

We resent the use of slave images in any literature, promotional material or propaganda when the use of such images results in the trivialization or simplification of the real African slave experience. More often than not, the Plexus literature, posters, flyers and invitation (a considerable amount) use images of slaves in bondage or in transit as cargo. It is offensive to trivialize history for the sake of artistic argument. Slavery and images of slavery are not merely metaphors. Slavery is the real experience of many hundreds of thousands of people. One cannot use a historical or current event as a vehicle for information without considering certain larger implications and slavery is central to both the American and African experiences. Certainly, there are similarities between the art market and the slave market, that in a disturbing way art has been reduced to a commodity like slaves: something to be bought and sold. However, there is a difference between comparison and

¹⁸⁸ Sadie Plant, *The Most Radical Gesture. The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age*, p. 81, 1992.

equation. If Plexus as a movement stands for freedom of art, freedom of interdisciplinary communication, and freedom of the artists in the first person, then these political tenets must be conveyed without demonstrating the all too common patronising air of most radical/liberal movements. Evoking images of slaves without, or at least acknowledging, the impact is objectionable. Before certain metaphors are used in any Plexus propaganda such use should be examined and the producer of such propaganda should first consider the potential social ramifications the use of that image may have.

On August 1988, at the House of the Slaves in the island of Goree, Dakar, *Plexus Art Slavery Manifesto* was presented internationally with an *Open Letter to All Artists of the World*, fully reported in Appendix A, to promote the renegotiation of a new contract of art.

After the first international event of the "Slaves of Art" in Sardinia, Italy, on July 4, 1987, with the participation of 160 artists from 23 nationalities; after the departure of the metaphoric trip in the history and mythology of "The Ship of the Slaves of Art," from New York on February 1986; there will be a second international event for the artists as independent producers in view of a debate on the Redefinition of Art and the research of a new kind of art contract, as a concrete expression according to the interests of the artists....In the island of Gorée, in the House of the Slaves, the final act will be performed as a homage to the freedom of the Human Being. The outcomes of this event will be reported to the world.

Therefore, Plexus International launches a call for all artists of the world to come to Dakar, from December 23, 1988, to January 3, 1989, to contribute to the opening of a credit line in favour of the International Art Community through the creation of an Art World Bank.

Plexus conceptualized as a provocative even creative art action the placement of a World Art Bank in Goree, metaphorically located to the *Door of No Return* of the House of the Slaves. In order to sustain this provocative claim, at the Agit Art space in Dakar, on the occasion of a Plexus presentation to the press, Plexus 23s by recalling the sale at Sotheby's auction of van Gogh's "Iris" for 53.9 million dollars showed to the Senegal Minister Alionne Ba the latest reports on extraordinary high prices paid for artworks sold the most important auction houses. Then, by recalling the Marcel Duchamp's provocative appointing of an "urinal" as a work of art, he displayed a Plexus Campbell's can, full of Plexus art money bills, and he pointed out its written directions: *Eating Art*.

The suffering slavery history of Goree and the strategic setting of Plexus in Dakar is pointed by the insider Assane MBaye in his recollection, fully reported in Appendix A.

The events in which I participated within the project of Plexus International are in effect multiple and different, both in idea and in action, realized with many difficulties, without money, with hard and very limited wealth from our side....Dakar-Plexus behind to be a strategic point between North and South and New York, Sardinia, Rome, Amsterdam, Dakar-Plexus movement goes to bring its serpent with a large "S." Goree is the symbol of a suffering history, the slavery and the Negro trade made the opening of the Atlantic sea and the invention of the "New World." All has begin from this, (door without return) today, as you say, we want to pass the limits of space-time, in the research of new dimensions throughout the ocean of art with new means of communication and of science...In the House of the Slaves, Goree, on August 26, 1988, we launched an open letter to the artists of the world to announce the arrival of the ship of the slaves of art which was previewed from December 23, 1988, to January 3, 1989. In the context of this encounter the artists have been invited to participate to the realization of the Art Co-Opera N. 5 "The Electromagnetic Serpent Ningki-Nangka and the Exile of Cheik Ahmadou Bamba", a synchronized and simultaneous presentation of art and science. It will be realized under the form of a parade spectacle in the island of Goree, in occasion of the second event of Plexus International, with a ritual ceremony made by the recovery of the sculpture of Arturo Lindsay, buried in the sacred land of Goree. It will give a great homage to the memory of the Diaspora, against racism and in the name of freedom of art. We wait with a great hope the international fond of art under the flag of universal reconciliation and we wait the arrival of the real ship of the former slaves of art on board the Elisabeth.

In Plexus, artistic and economic powers are closely linked to the concept of "the artist in the first person," as it is argued by the insider Jose Rodriguez in his presentation "*The Voyage of the Elisabeth: Cultural Navigation and the Community*," fully reported in Appendix A.

The Artist in the first person is a concept evolving from the following facts: that the perception of an autonomous art is a fallacy of the rationality of the Modern era. This "autonomous art" instead of negating the condition of artistic creativity as another commodity in reality is confirming this condition of commodity. As such the artistic production is another artifact named by the dominant structures of power and as such the artistic creation becomes an object of possession of the dominant power. As the dominant structures have this power also they determine and define what is to be considered "art." By such action the dominant structures eliminated two fundamentals elements of the artistic creativity - the artistic production as a reflection of the social praxis and as a cultural production. By this power the dominant structures are able to define in terms of "high" and "low" culture, "civilized" and "savage" culture. And most importantly this definition is a detriment for the cultural production of the society.

To a great extent, Rodriguez stresses that by "overcoming the relation of master-slave the artist in the first person and the community are able to start to participate in making their own definition."

Intentionally, *Plexus Black Box* was conceptualized outside the Artworld that for Arthur Danto and George Dickie is defined as a social activity concerning the political body. Current financial reports from art auction houses shows art products just as exclusive commodity symbols, like gold, diamonds and stock exchange bonds. Therefore, for their economic transformation from a simple work of art into money, labels and definitions from the Artworld are essential. The Artworld, as it is pointed out by Arthur Danto, is labelling the property of “art,” making possible for the artmarket to trade it and creating a consequent slavery of “art,” imprisoned by all “Isms” of art theories.

Plexus Art Slavery Manifesto, one of the relevant items of *Plexus Black Box*, was conceptualized as a statement against the interference of the Artworld in the creative art process that was pushing the emerging of “artists in the third person,” willing to produce artworks following only artmarket needs and will.

Reinforcing the role of the artist within the community, the concept of “the artist in the first person” as well as the model of “the artist as researcher” are in contrast with the view of art as commodity, as claimed by David Ecker.

We realized that we needed socio-economic models derived from elements drawn from the culture of a region and responsive to its special needs and values. Thus art viewed as entertainment, as a measure of social status, or as an investment by the New York Artworld would seem to require a capitalistic model featuring supply and demand, private ownership, and so on. Contrast this view of art as commodity with traditional views of art as sacred and secular performances of making and doing that reinforces continuity and solidarity in the group.¹⁸⁹

The insider Miguel Algarin in his recollection, fully reported in Chapter IV, calls for attention for the risk that artists as an *elite* should be taken away from their community, if, he argues, “we do not plant our feet on the sidewalk.”

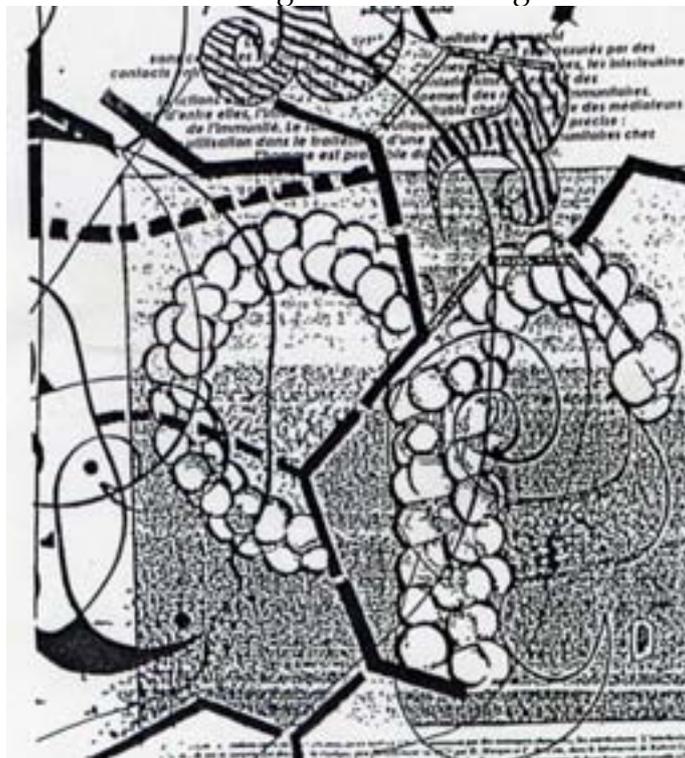
¹⁸⁹ David W. Ecker, “The Artist as Researcher: The Role of the Artist in Advancing Living Traditions in Art”, p. 5, 1990.

Eating Art

On the sail of the Plexus toy boat *Libertè de l'Art* made by Gaetano Brundu is represented his *moustache* symbol that, within his creative art process, has interacted with the artistic representation of the immunological cellular messenger Interleukine2, linking art and immunology through the creative genesis of certain forms and images, as the insider Gaetano Brundu describes in his recollection, partially reported in Appendix A.

Figure 54

Immunological Art Messengers



Artwork by Gaetano Brundu, Cagliari, 1986.

In the middle of the 80's came the encounter with the Interleukine 2 or better with the image of its molecular model elaborated in the laboratories of the University of Paris VI and published in the monthly French journal *La Recherche* in the May 1986. That image, made by Rimsky e Norris, represents one of the plausible configurations of the IL2 (Interleukine 2) in the space...The image of that model of IL2 I have put next that of my "baffo" (moustache), they have interacted in various ways in my pages,...The general title of my operation was the same title of the article of *La Recherche*: "Les Messangers de l'Immunitè." I was intrigued enough by those images very similar to mine "baffo," that appears suddenly on the panorama of science, connected to the mechanisms of immunity that are inner most mechanisms in defence of the organism. Also there a sign of strong vitality that I believe is at the bottom of the mystery of life and of the survival of beings and of species. The mystery

of my fantasy solidified the animal pregerminal vitality and the intimate defence found themselves in my creative work, in my fantasy over a distance of years. From an other side I was intrigued by the same mystery that took care of the genesis of certain forms and images, the encounter between gesture from which was born my first moustache and the systematic methodology of scientific research that brought me the "plausible" model of that molecule. So my problem, as an artist in the first person, a solitary artist but a careful one, (so I believe), to what was happening in the world, in that of effects and of dreams, particularly in that of science that in certain moments I do not know in which part to connect myself, between reality and fantasy. The problem tied to the mystery of genesis of forms, but also of a questioning of its subtle links to life that unify in time and space, aspects and ways of the existing which usually look without any connections between them. Naturally, as artist, neither this time did I feel bound to illustrate a theorem or some laws given prior or outside from my specific creativity; I was interested to go ahead with a process, an artistic process without even knowing the outcome. In this process intervened my way, also technical, to be an artist, the formal consolidated and fine games made over ten years above all through drawings, the consciousness of my particular collocation within the system of art. As an example of a drawing, I can remember that "Flight and Flights" that you know well because in 1976 we used for the poster of the concert of Scelsi that you organized at Spazio A. Therefore those two images, "the moustache" and IL2 interacted in the context of my drawing, and those marks derived from the quick gesture, from the sense of space that put in act familiar dynamics to me; they interacted with my history as an artist and with the intent of creating works of art, of constructing a new universe, of rhythms, of forms and sensibility.

Aesthetics in the late 80s, with the re-emerging role of art as a re-connected entity with the outside natural and social world, as result of the postmodern attack to the "autonomous art," has challenged also human capacities in dealing with multicultural changes of perception and values. The insider Sandro Dernini in his paper *The Metaphor as a Travelling Factory*, fully reported in Appendix A, describes the metaphoric relationship of art as food.

Art should not be considered only an exclusive 'commodity symbol' for commercial trade, but a 'food' for our nourishment, a compression of high 'know how,' not exclusive, not expensive, to fly with our bodymachine outside limits and borders of rational worlds and controlled markets. The metaphor is an ultra-rapid integrated communication system. It works with nanoseconds (billionths of a second), the time-scale with which today our logic computers are operating. One nanosecond is so fast that it exists before its rational thought. The metaphoric language of art can let us cross the boundaries of specialist fields, working by concatenated structures. Time-space, art, science, history, can only be compressed in a continuum in evolution, never consumed, only imperfectly perceived through their developments and jumps of discontinuity, as a serpent eating its tail act as self nourishment, which does not disappear consuming itself, but transforms itself continuously, recycling its matter. Not understanding and not accepting our common nature, and at the same time diversity, created an antagonism that took root in all different levels of our everyday life individually and collectively. The loss of freedom for the diversity to cohabit with the homogeneous more organized majority has been the cause of conflicts

between different worlds, with the continuous attempt at predominance by one identity over the other: the stronger over the weaker, the more rational over the less or a-rational, the white over the black or red, the richer over the poorer and Adam over Eve. Against this antagonism the pluralism of the Serpent metaphor has been deconstructed by Plexus to defend Human Rights against any discrimination, selection, racism and Apartheid...

Therefore, Plexus art co-opera, as an art project, is consumed by human beings (artists and audience) and this consumption causes cultural and physiological reactions effecting their metabolism, and interacting between them and interlacing with the biocultural evolution. There is always an interaction between culture and nature. Maybe art is the gene 'nonsense' of our genetic evolution and Plexus can be the image of a researcher of the invisible, where however the invisible is a word and a world of modern science. The metaphor for its pluralistic interpretations is used by Plexus project as the 'travelling factory' for its multi-lateral recall products. Plexus uses rational and a-rational methodologies in a coloured framework of global vision and relativity to try to discover in which panorama the art co-opera, at the same time object and subject, is moving. For the 90's Plexus art co-opera should be considered as a materialized metaphor, and art should be produced, consumed and loved as a dematerialized food to recall our ancestral memory.

Dernini further claims for Plexus the identity of a sociobiological mutant in evolution, helped by the metaphor of art to see further than optical possibility, like the dolphins, mammalian like the humans, are already doing with their electromagnetic sonar.

Official history with its ages and schools is not the measure of reality. The human being has modified with culture the rules of history, of its own natural evolution. To know the future is also to look back to the past, to arrive at the sources of our common roots, where the game of the metaphor can contain the memory of our lost ancestors. The metaphor of art can help us to see beyond the optical and rational horizon, Plexus can be considered as a mutant following its sociobiological evolution as a dolphin, member of our common class of mammalian that sees by means of its bio-electromagnetic sonar.

In his paper *Solar Plexus*, fully reported in Appendix A, he claims as follows that there is sociobiological crossing over between art and biology.

The human being is made by a physical integrated system, a socio-biological organism absorbing and transforming "energy," that provides necessary ionic charges for its biochemical reactions. These ionic charges effect the recombination of many conductive chemicals in solution in the human body, during the physiological metabolism process from "Matter-Food" into "Matter-Energy." The ionic recombination supply necessary conditions for the human being to exist and to think. Through networks of differentiated cells in communication together by interactive systems (Plexus or Chakras) this "Energy" is responsible of the biological information and its genetic transmission. The human being like the physical world, with all its animate and inanimate realities, is made in space and time by ionic transformations of differentiated states of "Energy-Matter." Our and their diversity in forms and behaviours in only a phenomenological effect of the relativism of the atomic crystal configuration on which the micro and macro realm of our reality is built. The human being's whole life is time-factored by energy configurations and

transformations of the ionic crystal mask of “Matter,” from computer silicon chips to the physiological sodium pump of human cellular membranes, from snow to rocks of mountains, from chromosome’s DNA to skeleton bones, from eating to moving, from thinking to conversation. Through “Art” as “Energy-Information”, we may develop its own socio-biological evolutive communication system to perceive, beyond our current optical rational limits, the immunological code of more evolved information biological systems, such as the electromagnetic dolphin’s sonar, mammalian beings like us.

Aesthetics in the 80’s became also a sociobiological realm of investigation and a critical issue in the philosophical debate upon the free will of the human being with respect to the supposed determinism of cognitive sociobiology. Edward Wilson claims, as follows, in *Biofilia* that “art” as living structure born from the environmental interaction between biology and culture, “a device for exploration and discovery” which, like a human mind, grows by absorbing parts of the culture in existence.

AT THE MOMENT the spark ignites, when intuition and metaphor are all-important, the artist most closely resembles the scientist. But he does not then press on toward natural law and self-dissolution transference of images and control of emotions in others....The mind is biologically prone to discursive communication that expands thought. Mankind, in Richard Rorty’s expression, is the poetic species. The symbols of art, music, and language freight power well beyond their outward and literal meanings. So each one also condenses large quantities of information. Just as mathematical equations allow us to move swiftly across large amounts of knowledge and spring into the unknown, the symbols of art gather human experience into novel forms in order to evoke a more intense perception in others. Human beings live — literally live, if life is equated with the mind - by symbols, particularly words, because the brain is constructed to process information almost exclusively in their terms. I have spoken of art as a device for exploration and discovery. Its practitioners and expert observers, whose authorities is beyond question, have stressed other functions as well.¹⁹⁰

Describing her experience with Plexus, Eve Vaterlaus highlights in her recollection, fully reported in Chapter IV, the relationship among, art process, problem solving and artists controlling factors.

This piece was technically difficult, if simple in concept. The photo blueprints were so large that they had to be exposed in the dark at a great distance for very long periods of time in order to print. I had to completely darken my entire loft for about a week and live with the ongoing exposures of my images, which supplied the only light. Then, when it came time to install the images, printed on fragile blueprint paper, in the pool I found that the walls were continually damp from condensation and it was difficult to stick them up, but I did find a solution. This piece was very satisfying in every way, beginning with shooting the photos, through solving the execution, the final

¹⁹⁰ Edward O. Wilson, *Biofilia*, p. 74, 1985.

look of the piece, and it was completely new work for me....Thus, my experiences with Plexus always demanded growth and change and new achievements in my work, as well as growth through meeting and working with large gangs of artists I would not have otherwise met.

David Ecker describes the artistic process as a *problem solving* method and art as an affair of intelligence in qualitative ordering.

Just as the law of logic are the controls by which theoretical symbols are arranged in scientific inquiry, so these pervasive qualities act as *controls* - directive criteria - by which component qualities are arranged in the artistic process. The artist utilizes qualitative method to arrange the qualitative means toward qualitative ends. Art, therefore, is an affair of intelligence - it is intelligence in qualitative ordering. The arts can now be seen as *specialized* products of qualitative intelligence.¹⁹¹

Ecker further describes intelligence as an "affair of experience," a creative activity of ordering "means to ends."

Intelligence, as here conceived, is the procedure of ordering means to ends; it involves purpose and control. Intelligence is always an affair of experience; it is a dynamic process which arises from past experience; it acts significantly to modify the context of present experience; and it is assessed in terms of its consequences in future experience. It is, then, a reconstructive, creative activity whereby presents materials (alternative means) are selected and rejected on the basis of whether they will secure anticipated futures (selected ends).¹⁹²

Ecker further clarifies the conception of intelligence as follows:

The conception of intelligence, which is equated with cognitive activity, is usually joined with the idea that reasoning at its best is a means by which man can get to know reality, the nature of the good, higher truths, or God. This "absolute knowledge," valued as the most worthy of human goals or ends, is to be achieved by dialectical, deductive or a priori methods of discursive thought. But whatever spiritual values are obtained by this kind of thought are more than offset by the notorious failure of these dialectical methods to solve the insistent and demanding problems of men-the problem of survival in the face of the vicissitudes of nature, as well as the problems of associative living. In striking contrast are the enormous successes of the empirical method and procedures of modern science in solving many of the problems of this world, among them the control of disease, maintenance of a food supply and adequate shelter-even the problem of national defense, where the most abstract of the physical sciences have practical bearings on human affairs. Thus scientific knowledge is instrumental; it is valued as a *means* rather as an ultimate end.¹⁹³

John Dewey in *Art as Experience* points out the significant value of the purpose's capacity "to overcome and utilize resistance, to administer materials," which fits fully

191 David W. Ecker, "The Artistic Process as Qualitative Problem Solving", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Criticism* 21 / 3, p. 287, 1963.

192 David W. Ecker, "Development of Qualitative Intelligence", p. 173, 1971.

193 *Ibid.*, p. 172.

with the intentional purpose that originated *Plexus Black Box*. Dewey further clarifies the significance of purpose as a controlling factor, by an individual transforming imaginative material into the matter of a work of art, leading to the integration of object and subject.

The significance of purpose as a controlling factor in both production and appreciation is often missed because purpose is identified with pious wish and what is sometimes called a motive. A purpose exists only in terms of subject matter....Purpose is this identification in action. Its operation in and through objective conditions is a test of its genuineness; the capacity of the purpose to overcome and utilize resistance, to administer materials,...¹⁹⁴

The insider Paolo Maltese describes metaphorically in his paper *An Infinite Serpent*, fully reported in Appendix A, Plexus like “an infinite serpent rising up to the tree of knowledge, renewing unity and consistence to self-conscious and common research.”

PLEXUS is therefore a metaphor in which observations, analyses, discussions, reflections, actions, pilot-shows, stretched to encourage the continuation of research, all come together, and like an infinite serpent rising up to tree of knowledge, renews unity and consistence to self-conscious and common research. In this way, by adventuring into mists of metaphor, myth and archetypes, one is brought closer to the mysterious since the metaphor is enemy of appearance, is the damp earth, and is the roots. Behind it lays the mystery of the future, the continuation of imaginary threads still be defined and fully elaborated, as PLEXUS looks for. Thus, PLEXUS project does not set itself easy objectives, so in an Event of such vast size as that of Gavoi (Sardinia), and based on very ambitious goals, (but also still very uncertain), the danger of rhetoric, indefiniteness and superficiality continually remain a possible trap.

The insider Franco Meloni in his paper *Paradox*, fully reported in Appendix A, offers a description how Plexus is fostering connections between different domain of knowledge and increasing creative concepts and connective sensations.

Any serious consideration of PLEXUS must take into account the distinction between the objective reality, which is independent of any theory, and the physical concepts with which the theory operates. A. Einstein, B. Podolsky and N. Rosen, Physical Rev. 47, 777 (1935)*

* (Physical Theory, in the original...)

Why to use a fundamental article at the basis of the unsolved questionable dispute between the probabilistic exponents of the Copenhagen School, and the deterministic scientists, Einstein *et al.*, to introduce a discussion concerning PLEXUS? To gain credibility, for example. And because of the intimate fashion that I see looking to problems involving few definite positions and many possible developments able to augment our desire to implement connections between different domains of knowledge. The most

¹⁹⁴ John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, p. 276-277, 1980.

exciting and sometime appealing question I have ever heard in these two years of activity in PLEXUS concerns my position as scientific entity in the not-ever-clear artistic movement. Generally, - What is PLEXUS? and what is your position in it? - is a very intriguing statement, mainly because of the complexity of the answer. I have tried many times to avoid a clear definition, but a night, forced by Sandro, a kind of equation came out in the form: $PLEXUS = kB \ln \Omega$.

There is a strong influence in this late-night output due to my old love for Boltzmann and for the implication that the true formula, where $PLEXUS = S$, the entropy of the system, had for the developments of Physics in many directions. It is very easy to connect the statement to many concepts in some way related to PLEXUS:

- i) there is the sense of the whole system as composed by separate but important parts: the artist in the first person;
- ii) there is the answer concerning the system as open or not, and the consequent entropy increment, with or without critical filters;
- iii) there is the close connection with the freedom of and in communication, Shannon relations of 1948 defining information as the difference of entropy before and after a message, and PLEXUS concerns also information;
- iv) there is in general the relationship between order and disorder;
- v) there is something of artistic in the definition of non-deterministic entities, in a sense exciting as von Neuman said on the term entropy related to information: "...no one knows what entropy really is, so in a debate you will always have the advantage.";
- vi) PLEXUS needs creative concepts, and with logical Ralston matrices also a little of statistical mechanics may aid to increase the number of connective sensations among us."

The insider George Chaikin in his recollection, fully reported in Appendix A, describes his interest on mechanism of perception and how through his *Haddamard Matrix*, dedicated to Ralston Farina, he started his Plexus participation with the objective to facilitate face to face communications among people.

My initial understanding of Plexus Black Box through my participation, made by the art work, the Haddamard Matrix retina, a device for image compression, for reducing information, was to facilitate face to face communications among artists all over the world...My relationship with Plexus started in 1985 on the occasion of the memorial for the death of Ralston Farina, a performing artist. Through Willoughby Sharp I met Plexus in that occasion at CUANDO. Time was gravity for Ralston holding him down. The concept of "time-art" was that art was related to time. In 1985 I showed at CUANDO a large copy of the Haddamard Matrix dedicated to Ralston; in 1986 I started the mass-production of 1000 copies of it to be distributed to the audience at CUANDO through the air fan of Ralston. In 1987 I produced an interactive telecommunication art event with Willoughby Sharp. In the same year I participated in the Symposium on the Dematerialization of Art, held at NYU-Icasa where I produced several hundred copies of my Haddamard Matrix drawing and distributed them by leaving them on the chairs of the audience. A journalist, from the audience asked to me why it was art, when it was not looked at like it was expected to be, in some customary way. In 1988 I faxed it from NYU to Sardinia. Most of what I did was engaged with the memory of Ralston Farina and to mechanisms of perception. I am interested in studies on aesthetic perception and divine proportion. The ultimate objective of my participation in Plexus was to facilitate communications among people, and I started to realize how I could use my model of vision,

based on the sunflower model, to reduce a great quantity of information in the process of telecommunication broadcasting.

The insider Sandro Dernini in his paper *The Metaphor as a Travelling Factory* further claims that in Plexus art co-operas the metaphor is used as multi-category framework bridging art and science as well as knowledge and unconsciousness.

The metaphoric language of art can be used efficaciously as an international and interdisciplinary system for a more qualified information and education if synchronized with modern science and coloured with universal myths. Plexus art co-opera uses the metaphor as a multi-category framework, as a crossing over between knowledge and unconsciousness.

The artistic activity as a mode of biological adaptation is pointed out by Morse Peckham, a mode of adaptation of the human organism to a non-human environment, in which "art operates as a disjunctive category," through discontinuity and chaos, exercising our modes of perception.

Art, as an adaptational mechanism, is reinforcement of the ability to be aware of the disparity between behavioural pattern and the demands consequent upon the interaction with the environment. Art is rehearsal for those real situations in which it is vital for our survival to endure cognitive tension, to refuse the comforts of validation by effective congruence when such validation is inappropriate because too vital interests are at stake; art is the reinforcement of the capacity to endure disorientation so that a real and significant problem may emerge.¹⁹⁵

In Plexus art process, participants and environment are interdependent, from each other as well as from the whole environment in which Plexus event, conceived as art co-opera, is taking place, as a necessary ecological condition for a unified survival of participants and environment. Plexus art co-opera process links participant artists as interdependent individual systems sharing together a common patrimony, as it is pointed out by the insider Sandro Dernini in his *The Metaphor as a Travelling Factory*.

In Plexus, in which the artist in the first person coexists as an individual system with other systems, there is a common patrimony which is shared collectively, and the artist has to be aware of the interdependence of each in the modular construction of Plexus art co-opera.

Plexus participants are interactive members of an "informational network," that by retroactive driving feedbacks is sharing survival "metamessages" among its participants, within an "ecological mind system," as Gregory Bateson points out in *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*.

¹⁹⁵ Morse Peckham, *Man's Rage for Chaos*, p. 314, 1965.

Therefore, if B is going to deal with A's indication, it is absolutely necessary that B knows what those indications mean. Thus, there comes into existence another class of information, which B must assimilate, to tell B about the coding of messages or indications coming from A. Messages of this class will be, not about A or B, but about the coding of messages. They will be of a different logical type. I will call them metamessages.¹⁹⁶

Chet Bowers in *Implications of Gregory Bateson's Ideas for a Semiotic of Art Education* claims that Bateson by linking the individual to the whole environment, in which she or he is part, challenges the anthropocentric Western culture and opens a radical new way of understanding art, in which "art" is not anymore a "simple expression of the individual's inner mental state, but a significant part of a system or ecology of relationships." He points out further that "we can begin to shift the focus of attention from the plenitude of individual self-expression to the plenitude of relationships that we share with each other and other life forms and to start to understand how the image of the self as an autonomous individual has contributed to the non recognition of the larger informational network that constitutes the person's relations with other people and the natural environment."

Through *Plexus Black Box*, made by a plenitude of interrelated contributions, Plexus participants started to perceive themselves part of a broader informational network bridging together different experiences. John Dewey in *Art as Experience* claims that when works of art from different cultures meet together it enlarges experience.

Nevertheless, when the art of another culture enters into attitudes that determine our experience genuine continuity is effected. Our own experience does not thereby lose its individuality but it takes unto itself and weds elements that expand its significance. A community and continuity that do not exist physically are created.¹⁹⁷

The need of new metaphors and new languages is claimed by John Gilbert.

We will need new metaphors to shape our understanding of performance, for performance is explained perhaps a little too easily as the surface of the work which changes in relation to the deep counters. We may need to come to a deepening of our own understanding of depth counters as they relate to specific media. While Heidegger pointed to the poet as thinker, the time has come for the artists as thinker to articulate new metaphors and new

¹⁹⁶ Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*, p. 115, 1979.

¹⁹⁷ John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, p. 336, 1980.

languages. This is, I submit, precisely what they are doing as they perform their art--that is form-it-through to its existence in its medium.¹⁹⁸

The insider Willem Brugman in his recollection, fully reported in Chapter IV, foresees coming in Plexus the time for the artist as thinker to articulate new languages and metaphors.

We have to think about the area in the beginning of the century by which music, dance and theatre as a music theatre concept came together. We have to make sure that Black Box will tell us after what had happened, what dramatic event had happened up to the point of the present that life would continue that certain things are and will be preserved.

The insider Antonello Dessi in his announcement *Multiples of Black*, fully reported in Appendix A, describes as a metaphoric journey his Plexus installation.

...is a metaphoric journey through spatial metaphors of the West. Inside, there are inserted main knot points of Western culture. At the entrance, there is positioned the Mediterranean mother with two umbilical cords, one toward the top and the other toward the bottom. Objects of Plexus Storage and of Plexus Black Box are channelled metamorphosed toward the symbolic representation of death.

“Art” as a shareable lived experience is pointed out by Lucy Lippard as relevant in the foundation of a social vision within new emerging multicultural perceptions.

One’s own lived experience, respectfully related to that of others, remains for me the best foundation for social vision, of which art is a significant part. Personal association, education, political and environmental contexts, class and ethnic backgrounds, value systems and market values, all exert their pressures on the interaction between eye, mind, and image. In fact, cross-cultural perception demands the repudiation of many unquestioned, socially received criteria and the exhumation of truly “personal” tastes. It is not easy to get people to think for themselves when it comes to art because the field has become mystified to the point where many people doubt and are even embarrassed by their own responses; artists themselves have become separated from their audiences and controlled by the values of those who buy their work.¹⁹⁹

The metaphoric concept of *Eating Art*, within *Plexus Black Box* art process, allowed dialogues and interdisciplinary exchanges among participants, bringing the community and the academy closer together, by linking the notion of “art” as a culture-bound aesthetic experience, to the concept of “well being” as a multicultural paradigm enhancing the quality of life in the community. The conceptualization of “Art” as “a human resource for a sustainable development” evolved in Plexus in the

¹⁹⁸ John Gilbert, *Qualitative Evaluation in the Arts*, p. 77, 1984.

¹⁹⁹ Lucy Lippard, *Mixed Blessing. New Art in a Multicultural America*, p. 7-8, 1990.

late '90s, related non only to its incredible high financial value, but, and first of all, to its evolutionary capacity to modify human evolution and increase humankind well being.

Well-Being in the XXI Century

The last *Plexus Black Box* event under this inquiry, held at the NYU Rosenberg Gallery, was focused on the theme of “*Art, Well Being and Reconciliation*” with the purpose to develop channels of communication and collaboration between the New York University and Lower East Side cultural and artists organizations. The last Plexus event under inquiry was focused to issues of multiculturalism in art, within the NYU course *Current Issues in Art Education*, conducted by David Ecker.

David Ecker in his paper *Cultural Navigation*, fully reported in Appendix A, raises the claim that it is imperative to bring artistic and aesthetic dimensions into the in vision of a new model of “well being.”

The nutritional, social, ethical, and economic aspects of well-being will undoubtedly receive critical attention in the proceedings of the Forum. But the artistic and aesthetic dimensions of life as we live it must figure in any formulation of a comprehensive vision of well-being. The arts make visible our cultural identity and diversity, and provide a direct measure of the vitality of the culture in which a particular art object or event is embedded. It follows that the arts and their living traditions have a special role to play in the relation to the well-being of the members of each of the cultures of the world.

David Ecker underlines how the model of “the artist as researcher” has affected many art students in regards to their consciousness of the survival of their own cultural and artistic traditions.

While these students come to New York University to learn how to become artists and art educators in the modern world, many of them return to their places of origin with a reawakened consciousness of their own art traditions, a strengthened sense of purpose, and a deeply felt need for cultural renewal.²⁰⁰

David Ecker further points out how this reawakening of consciousness is directly related to the well-being of the artists within their own community.

²⁰⁰ David W. Ecker, “The Artist as Researcher: The Role of the Artist in Advancing Living Traditions”, p. 3, 1990.

The felt need to preserve the meanings of a tradition in modern life is directly proportional to the loss of spiritual and material well-being of the artists and artisans sustaining an indigenous culture.²⁰¹

The position of the Rosenberg Gallery, in the NYU Barney Building, in the Lower East Side was strategically used to facilitate a broader participation from the community, including some radical activists. It was very complex and hard because of the diversity of positions, from one side the homogeneous institutional academic system and to the other side the heterogeneous community complex. The insider Frank Pio in his recollection, fully reported in Appendix A, points out Plexus difficulties in bridging the community and the academy during the Plexus event at the NYU Rosenberg Gallery.

I co-curated the last Plexus Black Box show at Rosenberg Gallery and my role was to organize the spiritual ritual elements of the show. My participation was also to re-activate the spiritual components of the Plexus Black Box which were lacking in strength and my pieces on the Madonna and Angels was about it. I like to recall the opening ritual of the show in which the most important part was the ritual aspect of it. Most people did not understand initially so many texts. The ritual to take everybody outside. Plexus Black Box was about all this information and about Sandro's dissertation. Plexus as community-based art organization was dealing with "Plexus Black Box" on the issue of the reconciliation through art in the community. Plexus Well Being and Reconciliation is some how for my interpretation a way to communicate, to create a dialogue how we can interact together around the world. My vision was related to universal aspects of the planet as it was stated by Marshall McLuhan. The "Plexus Black Box" was brought back to the community to avoid to continue to be contaminated by the academic institution because there were no interests of dialogue with the Lower East Side Community. The students of current issues in art education were invited to participate in the show and to discuss what they experienced there. It became an issue of current issue of art education because of its institutional standard setting. The cards of curriculum game were placed in the show as introduction to an art community-based art education program.

During this two weeks, curated by the researcher and Frank Pio, it has been explored the possibility to build bridges between the university and the multicultural community of the Lower East Side by developing a community-based art education project and increasing interactive dialogue between artists, students, teachers, community activists, and city commissioners. Its aim was to reinforce the role of the artist as a cultural producer in the community, who through her/his aesthetic experience is setting impact in the quality of life, with a sense of broader "*well being*"

²⁰¹ Ibid., p. 3.

as it is stated in the definition of "health" by the World Health Organization: "*health is the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.*"

Toward the advancement of the Well Being in the XXI Century, Plexus has contributed with the development of the 1992 *Columbus Open Call of Reconciliation for the Well Being in the XXI Century*, document reported in Appendix B, by promoting a creative approach for a route correction in the use of the human resources.

Therefore we issue an OPEN CALL for the development of creative approaches to the empowerment of the individual and of the community. We need alternative visions to attain the ROUTE CORRECTION necessary to bring about the true meaning of the CALL FOR RECONCILIATION and WELL BEING in the XXIst Century.

In 1995, within *Navigating Global Cultures*, an experimental collaboration between the Commission on Experimental Aesthetics of the New York University School of Education and the Interdepartmental Well Being Centre of the University of Cagliari, *Plexus Black Box* served as the creative platform for the launching from the Elisabeth boat, anchored in the harbour of Cagliari, of the *Marconi Open Call for the Well Being in the XXI Century*, fully reported in Appendix B.

We are a single, interdependent, world-wide specie.
Whether we like it or not,
We are intimately bound up with each other around the earth.
East and west, north and south,
Our fate is linked together.
Thus, a global view of human health is more essential now than ever before.

The insider Franco Meloni, as coordinator of the Interdepartmental Well Centre of the University of Cagliari, in his paper *Global Navigations*, fully reported in Appendix A, points out how Plexus was foreseen as a creative route bridging art and science to arrive to the well being.

Global Navigations. A name that inspires spaces, borders and possible targets. A name that represents a step in the evolution of an attempt to compare different cultures and peoples. Any of them with a proper character, to obtain a vision more complete to solve some problems always present with their fascinating complexity. The big discovers and the reached aims make confident in a possible progress of all the social components through a progressive improvement of our way of living. But if an insight of the new poverty fixes one dollar as a daily resource of billion people today, with which false security is it possible to face the solution of an equal distribution of the richness when enormous differences concern the lives of a lot of people. The

methods, the weapons the determinate will to act can and must come from the right components though of as critical consciousness of the society. First among them the University, for the knowledge that should represent and for the mixing of cultural relationships that could realise.

Art should have the same importance if we think that only with a complete connection of reasons and feelings it is possible to realise unthinkable projects. For Art and Science is written on the main entrance of the Cooper Union School of Architecture in New York, and the memory goes to the speech about the freedom of slaves by Abraham Lincoln. In the same sense of this speech, supported by reason for a fair human cause, the research trail of the right instruments to modify and to interpret the reality around us must be based on a scenario that can change name, and from PLEXUS we can arrive to Well Being, but must maintain coherently the route that through tracings in the mind and in the time not always linear, takes to the definition of the proper responsible role in the life.

Plexus Black Box became a creative framework to reopen informal local and international channels of communication, among individuals, young artists and masters, students and teachers, in separated communities of different cultures, as the insider José Rodríguez points out in his recollection, fully reported in Appendix A

In this context, the concept of Plexus Black Box grew as an educational community-based art project, in a broader cultural sense, creating channels of communication among different communities involved in Plexus activities to express their art experiences in connecting themselves with other cultural diversities and to educate the young generations in this multicultural diversity to understand what is art within and out their own culture, and to accept that the world, the society and any community is made by a diversity of many kind groups or cultural experiences. It will help to define themselves. The role of Plexus Black Box is to expose, to integrate all aspects of the society, art is one of these as well as science and technology. The concept of Plexus Black Box is a growing concept of a scientific system build in an institutional academic setting which is integrating artistic and cultural experiences in the community met during its growing. The knowledge of one is integrated into the knowledge of other one.

Jose Rodriguez further argues in his paper *The Voyage of the Elisabeth, Cultural Navigation and Community: Art Reconciliation and Well Being*, fully reported in Appendix A, on the survival need of a redefinition of a new multicultural synthesis, as a new paradigm for a new model of vision of well being in the XXI Century.

The Artist in the First Person and its praxis within the community insurance's the possibility of naming and defining the cultural production. The possibility of reconciliation among individuals and cultures is only possible through a reality base on multiplicity and diversity. The only way in which this diversity may reconcile is within the bridge of the cultural navigation. Multiplicity-diversity: pluralism is the only possibility of freedom! Freedom that defines the subject as the Permanent becoming as the possibility of a synthesis of the diversity. This cultural synthesis is the concretization of the well being for our present and for the possibility of the next Century. The Well Being is possible as far as the artist and its community are able to develop and create a new cultural synthesis.

The Insider Paolo Maltese in his paper *An Infinite Serpent*, fully reported in Appendix A, by arguing on Plexus art slaves event held in Gavoi, Sardinia, points out claims the need to reflect how Plexus and its interdisciplinary dialogue could turn into "History."

At this point Cicero springs to my mind, who used to ask himself, how soothsayers managed not to laugh when they met each other. The Gavoi opportunity has been useful, useful because it allowed contacts and feed-backs between artists who came from different areas, and who did not know each other. Among these were the inhabitants of Gavoi, a town in the centre of the Barbagia of Sardinia that accepted what could be defined as being - for Gavoi - a challenge. It was an important occasion for the inhabitant of Gavoi to reflect on what to do in the future, just as for PLEXUS to find proof for an interdisciplinary dialogue, got out from the usual artistic contexts (and scientific). This is the point I should like to emphasise: that what happened in Gavoi could become "History," in other words it could be the catalyst of reflections for everybody, for PLEXUS, thoughts which in their turn produce more thoughts and future realities for everyone, all in a continual spiral (the serpent), toward a future growth which is "History."

Final Remarks

At the end of his inquiry, the interpretation of *Plexus Black Box* is made by the researcher not as a conclusion, but as an open and critical aesthetic discourse. It is made with the aim to move a misunderstanding of the interwoven aesthetics of *Plexus Black Box* to its understanding as an open art form related to the complexity of the contemporary art debate.

With an open end, he concludes his inquiry with a not definitive understanding of *Plexus Black Box*, but just with a critical contribution, that moves from individual misunderstands to a collective collaborative understanding of it.

The inquiry at its beginning questioned the objective validity of insider accounts and related "emic" procedures. At the end of the study, the intense participation of insiders, who have sustained the researcher in his long efforts, has allowed marginal components of the study, hidden or isolated in the margin of the field research, to arrive to the kernel or thematic center of the inquiry, as it was claimed as possible by Alfred Schutz in *Reflections on the Problem of Relevances*. From the researcher's

artificial manipulation and split of insider identities, it originated that kind of “emic” result that was expected to be produced by a scholarly conducted research.

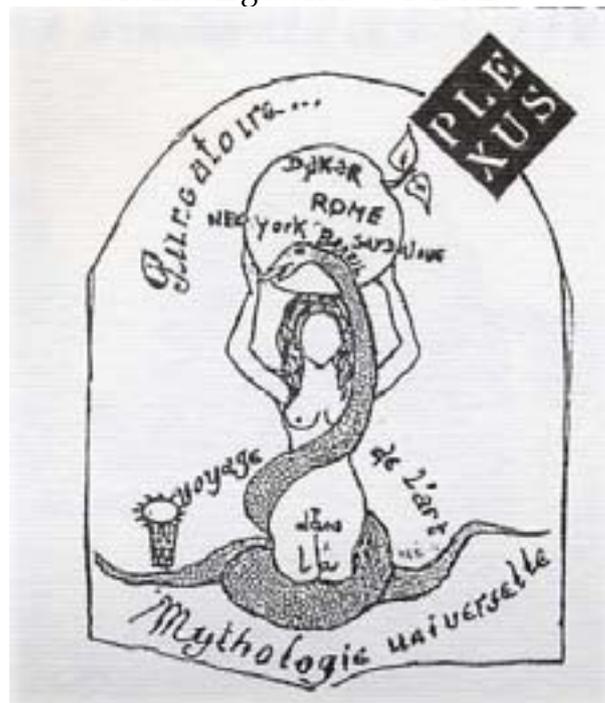
This study claims for a wider academic acknowledged awareness of the objective validity of “emic” understandings, especially in the “controversial” case under study in which the insiders are artists, who are fighting for the survival struggle of all artists in the community to have the rights on their own work and destiny.

Such claim immediately leads also into the world current debate on the globalization of the world and of its markets. The closed structure of the art market raises the urgent need of a renegotiation of a new art contract which will allows insider community-based participations in the critical control of such an important human resource.

The “emic” understandings of *Plexus Black Box* offered by the researcher at the end of his inquiry may serve as a framework for a further development of *Plexus Black Box* as a multicultural community-based arts education program, built from *bottom up*, not imposing from the top an outsider understanding.

Figure 55

From Purgatorius to Paradise



Artwork by Kre MBaye, Dakar, 1986.

There is no one-point conclusion in this study, therefore, the researcher is aware of it, and intentionally stops his inquiry by introducing the openness of a non Western act of reflection made in Dakar by the insider Kre MBaye in his recollection, fully reported in Appendix A.

Plexus is a tendency in direction of the universal of the civilization. It is a way to put together all people, it is a tendency to watch what happens in this planet with a consciousness of what happens, with no separation between the world and the human being. Plexus is not an organization, it is more about a philosophy, a thought, a proposition, a view on how we deal with the issue of the human being. It is a tendency in direction of the unity, against any definitions or classifications which make separations. Without unity, in the respect of the diversity and quality of the human being, there is not democracy.

APPENDIX A

PLEXUS "INSIDER" PAPERS AND ACCOUNTS

Aaron Barr

Transcript of his recollection as interview, New York, 1994.

Plexus for me is an art spiritual journey. What I placed inside the Plexus Magic Box is something that reflects the teaching of my master Baba Mutananda who does not belong to any particular religion but following his own spiritual path through the chakri recognized our universal relation with the world. The Plexus Magic Box is a multi-cultural event. With some Plexus memorabilia and other materials belonging to me, I created, inside the box a Plexus universe, something that told a story about the unseen world of Plexus and of its spiritual path/journey, on different levels and places, in which I got involved. I let the material to go together as in a collage. What I experienced was a universal love which as a universal message I understood to be in the end the ultimate message of Plexus of reconciliation through art. I remember vaguely the USA Club Plexus event with the serpent around the magic box. I can describe my experience with Plexus Black Box as a multicultural event with so many different elements and the swimming pool event at CUANDO in 1988 was an example of it. Plexus can be described only in action where all people go together in action and not as a theory or a thought. Plexus acts upon its art goals of reconciliation and love among all people of the world. The most significant element in Plexus is that its events by itself are actions of reconciliation in reality and not just theoretical statements. What they are about is to bring people together of various cultures with different ways of life under one roof so we can experience that we are one. Plexus has its own way to achieve this reconciliation goal through art and to bring philosophy in practice, this is way the events in Plexus are more important than the theory of it. Without them, Plexus remained just as an idea.

Text *Plexus Magic Box*, New York, 1994.

The Plexus Magic Box is a multi-cultural event. The box which eventually became the Magic Box was given to me to use in an artwork of my choice by a friend who is a known world traveller who had brought the box all the way from Asia to New York City. It sat empty for two years amongst a vast variety of objects one amasses as a constructionist and collage artist. Waiting until one day when in conversation with Dr. Dernini the idea arose to construct a "Magic Box" to represent Plexus. I had been working on a series of magic boxes for five years. All in their own way representing an aspect of the inner journey, exactly what the world of Plexus represented to me. Through Dr. Dernini's great passion for Plexus, in time I came to understand much of the formation and on-going concepts of Plexus as well as Dr. Dernini's vision for the future accomplishments he hoped Plexus would achieve. These many conversations formed the "material" I used to create the Plexus Magic Box 1. As you study the box you will recognising that you are looking at a Plexus universe made up of memorabilia from Plexus events as well as material metaphors for the artistic and spiritual journey we are all undertaking on some level. Here lays my reason for placing Swami Muktananda, one of the greatest spiritual leaders of the last half of the twenty century, at the pinnacle of this boxed universe. He is there, as he was here, for one reason which is to remind us of our own nature and that we are in truth one. It is my clear understanding that this is also the message that Dr. Dernini, through Plexus, has put into action by endeavouring to "heal and reconcile" all cultures through the common denomination of art.

Fabrizio Bertuccioli

Written recollection, Rome, 1994.

On my participation in PLEXUS International I had just started again to work very heavily in the field of visual arts and I was trying to create a group of artists gathered around the same operative lines, that is: liberation of artists from the cage of the art market, direct taking over of the 'intellectual' responsibility for one's own work, re-establishing of a link between art and culture (rather than the consumer-like attitude of the star system), 're-invention of the locations of art', and the making in the first person. I was working on a wide area making use of various channels and especially involving those artists who, though very good and lively, had no place inside the 'official' circles. In 1986, together with a quite large group of artists which called itself 'Magazzini Generali' (Bonded Warehouse), I was organizing the 'Project Against Apartheid', when we received, through the connections established during the task at hand, namely through Dr. Sandro Dernini, the invitation to participate in the PLEXUS event 'Il serpente di Pietra' (The stone snake), which was to take place in Sardinia. Among the working papers sent from New York, I found enclosed some pages from the 'Fire' magazine, published in the U.S.A. around the twenties, which I found to be of great interest with respect to the problems of contemporary artists, and very close to the spirit of our own operation. Therefore, I decided to participate in 'The stone snake' event, i.e. four days of art and science, the international market of art slaves (Gavoi, July 1987). From the first PLEXUS papers I read and the first meetings with people involved in it, I realized that, according to me, this project is very much on the same line of what we are trying to do, offering, in addition, wider and structurally more advanced operative conditions, relying on an already developed international global strategy, with its own history, and with passwords synthesizing concepts which are essential for the freedom to express, research, and communicate. I realized that working together with PLEXUS could give us the possibility to give voice to a force capable, if not of solving, at least of raising the problem of a different relationship between art and society, thus re-negotiating 'the art contract'. Moreover, PLEXUS gives us the advantage of tools such as the 'art co-opera', which enables artists and scientists from different places and with different backgrounds to contact each other for a limited period of time in creative situations with the aim of producing a tangible result. This promotes a high-level interaction from which new life sparks, new seeds and new fruits are born to the advantage of a re-discovered 'International Community' of artists in the first person. These are, in short, the reflections which led to my active participation and first-person initiative in the PLEXUS project (see papers, events, and works produced). I must say, however, that in the course of time I've often had reasons to consider some risks connected to the PLEXUS internal dynamics, which, in fact, often shows the same negative trends against which the whole project had initially come into being: that is, repeated tendencies to turn the project to personal, egoistic advantage, and mean power games resulting in the fact that happenings originally created by PLEXUS have wound up appearing under a different label (often that of some Establishment institution); all things which clearly emerge from a careful inspection of the documents. The worst thing, however, is the persistence of a discriminatory attitude toward artists, who are often relegated to an accessory, ornamental role in the context of the most relevant happenings. This emerges clearly from the fact that artists have no access to the economical budget and have to participate at their own expense, while, on the contrary, other participants - whether professors, scientists, intellectuals, managers, or representatives of this or that institution - come to carry on their businesses at the organization's expense. I won't, however, attempt any analysis or de-construction of what PLEXUS has produced in the recent years, this task being up to researchers in

fields different from mine (critics, historians). My concern is art making, with the consciousness that this will become increasingly difficult insofar as the snake keeps biting its own tail.

Paper *The Artist in the First Person*, in *Chiamata Aperta di Plexus International per gli Schiavi dell'Arte*, Rome, 1988.

The Artist in the First Person. The creation of autonomous organisms of artists who are producers in the first person of their works is one of current research project pursued by the artistic movement and the international "community" of artists in the everyday organization of their work (see PLEXUS and the informal autonomous movements working in various countries). Withdrawing in order to exchange the social composition of a freely composed world is a behavioural system that relates the homogeneous and the heterogeneous. The homogeneous is the world of industrial production, wherein economy is the model which determines relationships. The production of exchange is therein reduced to zero and a loss of possible values is determined, the model imposing itself on the heterogeneous through a refusal to communicate which create marginality and impoverishment. Withdrawing, getting estranged from that model, is an attempt to turn this poverty into wealth. Art as the realm of "gratuitous" is the invention of possibilities of free withdrawal and the production of acts, events, objects, etc....through which an exchange is reinvented between unrelated and heterogeneous spheres, that of the useful and that of the useless (play). The reinvention of exchange between these spheres, the re-establishing of a relationship between homogeneous and heterogeneous, allows us to identify values which are necessary for the survival of any civilization. This is the work engaged in by artists as utopian producers of the "gratuitous," a work for which too often they have to pay the price. To deny marginality as a chance for enriching the exchange between those heterogeneous who withdraw from the dominant homogeneous, to propose an attitude toward the programming and production of projects which actually amount to denying the chance itself, is a crime against freedom and against a freely composed world, before than a crime against creativity and art. Reinventing the locations of art is an operative element in this marginality. When one sees a piece of art in a place that is already "valorized," in a place already assigned to art, everything one sees acquires "authority," becomes important, and exchange becomes impossible. When, instead, one sees it simply just like that, in an ordinary place, without the prop of the 'appropriate' place and surroundings, one finds it easier to criticize, one is forced into a relationship with it. It is the capacity to perceive normality as opposed to the expectation of an extraordinary event, which, in most the cases, is just a prefabricated display. The production of use value consists in the attribution of sense to the world of signs and objects which man produces for man (play). Art is where it is, not what it is. Why is man an exemplary citizen as long as he lives in noise, but becomes a rebel as soon as he sets about listening to himself? The live TV news becomes the only acknowledged reality in the world. The individual must make himself fitting and predictable if he hopes for a place in a world where every fantasy has found its justification. An event is accepted only if its presentation cancels the risks that preceded it. Since art in itself is experiment and research, it is the attest way to experiment and research in any field (it is the natural place for such activities). The artist as research scientist must become the critic of fame. Artistic production must be capable of doing away with 'the opposition between wealth and poverty,' the opposition between the abstract and the concrete in the human condition. Whoever engages in art-making has to adopt toward the present time the attitude implied by the concept of the artistic work's gratuitousness. Art is the "need to exercise humanity" without hoping for fame, without falling into worry about the future and into anxiety to succeed, to grow attached to a piece of work, to suffer the limitations of reason, to lose sight of life. An attitude of gratuitous expense is the first form

taken by the imagination of wealth, its source, while giving up living, storing, and saving up are its contrary. The artist today mustn't work for the 'art business' only, mustn't make use of his imagination only in the making of his work. He has to use it also in his everyday life, determining new relationships which are coherent with his spirit, with his inner life, thus accepting other people's creative energies as well as his own. Only starting from a way of making which is not ruled by the laws of the production of goods, which is beyond the condition imposed by a culture that models every human activity on economy, and that on this model has moulded every form of production, invention, communication, socialization, and formation of personal identity, only starting from a way of making which is gratuitous from the point of view of these laws it will become possible to re-invent the 'location of art.' Only starting from this condition it will become possible to identify a new wealth which is unity inside the person between bodily and spiritual being and unity among people, and to imagine the life of a society which is free from fear and freely composed. Then, maybe, something will be born that we could feel like calling art. It is thus necessary that artists, 'withdrawing,' work in first person as producers of themselves and of their own projects, grouping themselves into a society in which each artist is present with his own identity, his own credit line, and his own product, giving body to the heterogeneous which invites dialogue with the homogeneous (which would like art to be industrial production and the artist a follower of orders: star system) on the results of the ongoing and ever changing research, thus setting in motion a dynamics of behaviours and relationships from which new life sparks. It would be the first time in history that the homogeneous and the heterogeneous were not in a relationship of conflict, of mutual elimination, and everything deriving from that, and this is valid and extendible to all fields where those human relations operate which determine the life of society. If this were to happen, historically it would amount to the end of the civilization of barbarism, the extinction of the sense of guilt, the disappearance of the fear of being like what one rejects, which is often identified, in fact, with the heterogeneous. This is today the historic task of artists in the first person and of those who have been able to keep alive and foster the being, and who have had the luck not to mistake it with the having. In this spirit came into being a Plexus photo event by the international community of artists in the first person working in New York, Amsterdam, Paris, Rome, Cagliari, Dakar, to further freedom of association and expression for the international community of art.

David Boyle

Text *La Scatola Nera* (Black Box), New York, 1989.

At the finish of July we commence a comforting phase of auto-analysis that is made possible by the relative confinement of the Plexus movement within the scattola nera (black box). The confinement is accomplished by utilizing the material residue of the movement that we call documentation in a ritual manner. Until this decisive moment/action the Plexus movement was following the traditional path into history, but by this action which constitutes an intervention in the process, we choose our point from which to address history. The traditional path included a gradual abandonment of active interest in the movement. By utilizing the metaphor of planetary mass we could understand the evacuation of the most heavy elements from the core of the body (mass) results in an instability that necessitates a collapse of the body to re-establish the core mass. Rather than to wrack the body of this movement with such a change of structure, we have intervened to freeze the movement in time through the use of ritual documentation. The core group is stabilized by this action. Founding members of the movement cited dissatisfaction with the shift within the movement away from new ideas. The action taken by the

remaining elements of the movement to place the movement in a sort of stasis to facilitate analysis represents a sort of retrospective consensus.

Gaetano Brundu

Partial transcription of his written recollection, Cagliari, 1994, translated from Italian by the researcher.

Plexus has often given the impression of escaping from the system of art and its codes of communication. So therefore it is difficult to identify its relationships with the problematics of contemporary art. If we can find the problem and if we can see at which level of involvement and understanding, we can distinguish between objective and subjective relationships. Furthermore, Plexus is widely innovative (but is it?), the problem can be rather finding what distinguishes the surrounding environment, so we need to define the intrinsic characteristics. And for this reason I think that it is still not arrived the time, because to close Plexus in a label it is to declare its end. Or would be only the end of its evolving age? This can be something we can think about over the next few months. There is still the fact, rather evident, that many manifestations of Plexus express themselves in a sense of inadequateness, a sort of unprotected lackness compare with the communication in act within the system of art. A little bit the ship of fools, a little bit a balloon without a rudder going around the sky. But this can be the element that gives its originality. In this fragile and instable limit between folly and genius, between instinct and historical awareness, between excellent flights and falls to the levels of jerks or of pigs, it has played in the defining the destiny and identity of Plexus. I believe that I have already said in the letter to Mazzarelli made in May 1992. Plexus can be characterized and have its originality, in the very system of art it has been so often excluded from because of the lack of the responsibility of some of the players or by choice, or anyway objective placement; characterized by its diversity. Its exit from the system could be important. But how many people are aware about it? How many see the methodological necessity in it? Somebody might fall back often into the temptation of finding a way to get in to the system, a way to "success;" and this is what I meant before about the jerks. To exit from the system could be a methodological tool (and it can be also a praxis) that can modify and help Plexus grow in reference to the same system; and in the final analysis it could help that same system grow. If I have to make a reference for Plexus about the problematic issues of contemporary art, I wouldn't even know which components to exactly mention. We could speak about "Ephemeral Art," Narrative Art; but also visionary sensibility, that is a characterization that is not only contemporary. In the history of Plexus there is a lot of Conceptual Art but it is only a component part. And so: what can we connect the metaphor of Plexus Art Cooperas and of other events? to the Carnival in Rio? Or furthermore: what sense does it have to attribute, to what connect the frequent jumps of sloppy and irrational acts, at the limits of craziness? to the first Dada? Plexus produces the event but produces also the object, that which in the Storage we called relics. Certainly Plexus has been quite inclined toward "the event;" characterized by (it seems to me) the escape from reason by some of the players. Lively dialectics, therefore, between program and unleashed fantasy or anyway not disciplined, free fantasy in a way from potential rules and methodological rigors conditioning its program and self-discipline. What prevails in my works? I think that I sway to find equilibrium between my various personal experiences, a kind a virtual synthesis outside single episodes. But could it or should it be a kind of virtual thing, a thing which was only mine and that can not be communicated easily. In my work there is the object - the drawings, but also little white pieces of papers, there was the concept - "The Mystery of Interleukin 2", "the Ghost of Liberty", the event - installations, but rarely actions. I have also a global perception of these experiences, and I did not live them as comparisons and irreconcilables, admitted that this reconciliation was a problem. There was some need of mediating, there was so to

survive that moment of a deep subjective equilibrium, that idea and that synthesis that rest inside of me; and I did not know how to define differently. Anyway, to know if and how Plexus would confronted itself with the particular problem of contemporary art, for me up till now wasn't a question that concerned me. It is a problem, I wish to say that for the moment I put it in parenthesis. Now I see it like a lazy game with labels. Personally I am not interested in looking for or finding feedbacks. I have been interested and still am interested in establishing a relationship between my work and my global identity as an artist in the first person and this open situation, like magma, as if I had in front of me an identity to inseminate. I am interested in this projection toward the future, toward the creation of something that did not exist before in the system of art. But to define it is like killing it. I thought, and I think to be able to contribute by giving a soul to this collective process by bringing my story inside, the story of my 30 year relationship with the system of art. So do not think that the moment has come to look for feedbacks and definitions in particular categories and tendencies. This is at least my position today. Maybe it is too subjective, but I believe that it may fit into a program. You speak of a sinking. After years of happy and unconscious sailing, it was inevitable that the ship of fools would crash against some rocks or paradoxically would go down in a calm sea. It doesn't seem that this ship at the level of unconsciousness has come across many of the problematic issues which dominate the system of art today. Certainly, there were being also some convergences, objective not conscious. This unconsciousness could have constituted its salvation up to the point of going down but sinking is not sinking, but a renewal and regeneration. The ship of fools is like "l'Araba Fenice." But you can say that the unconsciousness, the ignorance of the rocks has consolidated the non existence of the rocks, therefore, "The Zen and of the art of not sinking," it is a book that hasn't been written yet. can Plexus write it? Regarding the series dedicated to the molecular image of Interleukin 2 I believe necessary an introduction. An introduction which began in 1962, when my first work from the series of "Lions" was made. It was in this work where for the first time that emblem now known as "Baffo" (moustache) still present today in my work. In that "Lion I" from 1962 (oil on canvas, kept at the Institute of Art History in the Letters School, University of Cagliari) in the center of the snout there was a kind of little anchor or vague phallic symbol. The work depicts a lion's head and originated from a gesture, a quick brush of colour in which I made in a moment of "improvisation." Do you see? we come back to that which could have taught us Jazz: the role of improvisation in the genesis of the work of art. I thought that have expressed in that painting the sign of a pregerminal force, the essence of vitality. In those years I was already aware of the problematic issues related to psychoanalysis, I saw my product was solidly anchored in Freudian dream symbols. In the middle of the 80's came the encounter with the Interleukin 2 or better with the image of its molecular model elaborated in the laboratories of the University of Paris VI and published in the monthly French journal "La Recherche" in the May 1986. That image, made by Rimsky e Norris, represents one of the plausible configurations of the IL2 (Interleukin 2) in the space. It began like that in 1986 my series of copy art that you know and that in part you felt to use for your research. The image of that model of IL2 I have put next that of my "moustache," they have interacted in various ways in my pages, cm 30x21, the same dimensions, the same kind of little pieces of papers used for the installations, using combinations, and successive reductions, games of collage and added marks. The general title of my operation was the same title of the article of "La Recherche:" Les Messengers de l'Immunité. I was intrigued enough by those images very similar to mine, "the moustache," that appears suddenly on the panorama of science, connected to the mechanisms of immunity that are inner most mechanisms in defence of the organism. Also there a sign of strong vitality that I believe is at the bottom of the mystery of life and of the survival of beings and of

species. The mystery of my fantasy solidified the animal pregerminal vitality and the intimate defence found themselves in my creative work, in my fantasy over a distance of years. From an other side I was intrigued by the same mystery that took care of the genesis of certain forms and images, the encounter between gestures from which was born my first "moustache" and the systematic methodology of scientific research that brought me the "plausible" model of that molecule. So my problem, as an artist in the first person, a solitary artist but a careful one, (so I believe), to what was happening in the world, in that of effects and of dreams, particularly in that of science that in certain moments I do not know in which part to connect myself, between reality and fantasy. The problem tied to the mystery of genesis of forms, but also of a questioning of its subtle links to life that unify in time and space, aspects and ways of the existing which usually look without any connections between them. Naturally, as artist, neither this time did I feel bound to illustrate a theorem or some laws given prior or outside from my specific creativity; I was interested to go ahead with a process, an artistic process without even knowing the outcome. In this process intervened my way, also technical, to be an artist, the formal consolidated and fine games made over ten years above all through drawings, the consciousness of my particular collocation within the system of art. As an example of a drawing I can remember that "Flight and Flights" that you know well because in 1976? we used for the poster of the concert of Scelsi that you organized at Spazio A. Therefore those two images, "the moustache" and IL2 interacted in the context of my drawing, and those marks derived from the quick gesture, from the sense of space that put in act familiar dynamics to me; they interacted with my history as an artist and with the intent of creating works of art, of constructing a new universe, of rhythms, of forms and sensibility.

Paper *For Plexus*, Cagliari, 1994, published originally in French in *Passport for Plexus Serpent*, Celt Edition, Cagliari, 1987.

The artists and intellectuals' cosmopolitanism is an ancient aspiration often mortified by poverty, by tiredness, by mistrust in humanity and by the melancholic condition of those live in islands and little islands. And yet the planet is today really a village. Communication networks more and more are becoming frequent and punctual: making to circulate our own ideas, our dreams, even in shape of work of art, of proposal, of questioning, is today virtually easy and speedy. So, for artists in the first person, Plexus may become the net of which we little in despair far inhabitants of islands can vibrate the yarns for radiate our creative messages, in hope that such messages don't get lost in a desert of indifference. Plexus may become an important opportunity for those who feel themselves somehow creative and, as artists in the first person, feel the need to throw their message to this net; message that is going to be much more than a bottle entrusted to the ocean streams.

Announcement *Plexus Storage Calls NYC*, Cagliari, 1992.

The Third Plexus International Storage installation, Storage Calls NYC, opened June 13, 1992, will end September 15. It is an operation in progress: begun with objects by George Chaikin, Ivan Dalla Tana, David Boyle, Alfa Diallo, Leonard Horowitz, Lorenzo Pace, Rolando Politi and Barnaby Ruhe, it is gone on with insert of Carol Black, Nilde Cortez, Steven Di Lauro, Ralston Farina, Ray Kelly, Arturo Lindsay, Patricia Parker, William Parker, Wess Power, José Rodriguez and others. This call on New York City precedes fourth installation, Multiples, by Antonello Dessì and follows Plexus Imprinting, A Story by Anna Saba; first installation of the Storage was Opening, fitted by Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Piero Cianflone, Ciro Ciriaco and Sandro Dernini. This Act Three, of which I assume the whole responsibility, may be the first in a line of call other Plexonian centers: but New York is New York, it is a little the mother house, a house who is imaginary of homeless to, virtual as some artistic reality and our own existential reality, virtual, is more real than real. This call NYC is

recall, is the continuity of a poetic dialogue living for several years, it finds on some objects produced by plexonians of New York, relics of Plexus history. From those objects and from their interaction with other relics kept in the Storage, originates a production of images, poetic tensions in a ephemeral and virtual space, built at the moment in the view finder of the reflex; so the photographs constitute the work of art, the work produced by their installation of the Storage. In side of decayed and entangled space of San Francesco al Corso in Cagliari, ideally struggling with barbarous and barbaric intrusions of the present and past, struggling with darkness and profusely laid down entropy will, the relics of some stories happened in NYC during memorable evenings, suggest new adventures for creative fancy, another trip amongst thousand real and virtual trips that are possible on the yarn of Plexus network, net that vibrates in known and known canvasses, from the more subtle, rational and lucid to the craziest and ricketiest.

George Chaikin

Transcript of his recollection as interview, New York, 1994.

It is difficult for collaborative art group endeavours to have space in old traditional exhibitions where only one person get usually credit as the creator. Recently there is a move toward more democratic forms where all people are participating in the making decisions process. My initial understanding of Plexus Black Box through my participation, made by the art work, the Haddamard Matrix retina, a device for image compression, for reducing information, was to facilitate face to face communications among artists all over the world. Then I realized that my art work in Plexus was used by other artists, like Gaetano Brundu and Maria Grazia Medda, as a foundation for the growing of collaborative development. My feeling of Plexus Black Box is that there is a continuous shift of what is in the box and why. I believe that its' relevance was more related with whom in that moment was participating and from the circumstances. My participation was made not under any hierarchy, because it switches always in time and space. I believed that I never was a key player. I participated without understanding what I was doing with the belief that others were understanding. Over years, as the process recurs, in retrospect, I began to understand what was happening. Sometimes I did not know what and why something was happening but, later on, it made sense. The Plexus process is a non linear activity and is less rational, in which the coherence appears only after the fact. After my experience over the years I know that there is not a need to get every "i" dotted and cross every "t" in terms of understanding it. This is because you will understand it only after you let yourself participate in it. In Plexus the question of the balance between leadership and democracy was not relevant, and I believe myself to be a profoundly democratic person. I believe also that Plexus is a coherent democratic structure because it has not a hierarchic structure. Sandro covers his role of orchestrating it on a basis of a democratic participation. Everybody has his/her own point view and with different art forms in which not everybody is interested in it. Plexus Black Box was an attempt to document the history of Plexus. My relationship with Plexus started in 1985 on the occasion of the memorial for the death of Ralston Farina, a performing artist. Through Willoughby Sharp I met Plexus in that occasion at CUANDO. Time was gravity for Ralston holding him down. The concept of "time-art" was that art was related to time. In 1985 I showed at CUANDO a large copy of the Haddamard Matrix dedicated to Ralston; in 1986 I started the mass-production of 1000 copies of it to be distributed to the audience at CUANDO through the air fan of Ralston. In 1987 I produced an interactive telecommunication art event with Willoughby Sharp. In the same year I participated in the Symposium on the Dematerialization of Art, held at NYU-Icasa where I produced several hundred copies of my Haddamard Matrix drawing and distributed them by leaving

them on the chairs of the audience. A journalist, from the audience asked to me why it was art, when it was not looked at like it was expected to be, in some customary way. In 1988 I faxed it from NYU to Sardinia. Most of what I did was engaged with the memory of Ralston Farina and to mechanisms of perception. I am interested in studies on aesthetic perception and divine proportion. The ultimate objective of my participation in Plexus was to facilitate communications among people, and I started to realize how I could use my model of vision, based on the sunflower model, to reduce a great quantity of information in the process of telecommunication broadcasting. What is the Plexus Black Box and what is its function? Ritual is very important in the understanding of it by giving continuity and connecting one activity to another one. Initially I did not like ritual but after I participated more in these activities I understood that the ritual of documentation became a significant part of Plexus by keeping in it the life of the community and bringing people together. The ritual activities of the documentation became a form of collective joint participation in which each one gave up something in order to share in a global participation which turned to become a contemporary art form. These ritual activities of Plexus Black Box which easily could be characterized as chaotic activities turned into a kind of art form which ended by also documenting the unity and coherence of all this chaos. Plexus Black Box became in the end the unifying element of a collective participation in which the photo of that moment was the key ritual element of a documentation for Plexus own history.

Sandro Dernini

Paper *The Artist in the First Person*, published in *Passport for Plexus Serpent*, Celt Edition, Cagliari, 1987.

160 artists of 23 different nationalities, that on July 4, 1987 arrived in the sanctuary of Sa Itria in Sardinia, were the real protagonists 'in the first person' of Plexus art co-opera n° 4, *Il Serpente di Pietra*. This event was organized as the first international art slaves market show, produced and managed by the artist in the first person. It took form in the confrontation, collision, encounter between all players of this Plexus 'challenge-game-show' on the star system of the art market. It was played by two teams mainly: A) the co-authors of 'the anti-libretto' for an art co-opera, made as a unitary and compressed presentation of the synchronized collective deconstruction of the serpent. B) The authors of 'the libretto' for an art opera as a modular and selective construction of individual art-works. The stake was the apple of the art star system. The supreme judge was the Serpent. In the atelier des arts that came first and built *Il Serpente di Pietra* Plexus interacted with the time-space of Sa Itria, a megalithic sanctuary, ten miles far from Gavoi (a small village at the center of the island of Sardinia, Italy), and with the times-spaces of the 160 artists speaking different languages and codes. The artist in the first person became the absolute winner of this Plexus game, playing as slave and working as artist, free indeed to express itself without curators, mediators and critics. My image of Plexus artistic director, since Plexus art slave journey started in New York in 1986, was the slaves dealer who forced time-space of individual artists as slaves of art, trying (no always successfully) to chain them into a Plexus frame of an art slave ship escaping from New York City art market control. My task as art slaves trader as well as artistic director was to follow the needs of Plexus art slave journey for a common Plexus strategy of a marketing control of the global image of *Il Serpente di Pietra* as Plexus art co-opera n°4, and for its outsider perception as a unitary total theatre. Inside Plexus there was the violence of very strong emotions, evoked by the surprising panorama around the megalithic sanctuary-stage, and produced by particular conditions in which this international auto financed journey developed and (not ended yet) arrived in Sardinia after many economic, political, artistic, technical, and

personal difficulties (not easy to digest). These present difficulties caused problems, fights, separations, discussions, critic dialogues, and solidarity finally like on a real slave ship. As in a modern rite, dedicated to Bruce Richard Nuggett's Fire!! (Harlem 1926) and to the bronze mutant of my land of Sardinia, Plexus artistic director was eaten by a serpent of fire. Deliberately I burned and destroyed the image of Plexus artistic director, as previously I announced in 1986 in New York, after Eve art opera n°3, following the 'art-logic' and the 'time-art' of Plexus strategy map against the pyramid of the star art system. There is not anymore time-space for art filters between the artist in the first person and Plexus. Plexus is a co-authorship art venture, created, produced, and managed by the artist in the first person only. In the end of *Il Serpente di Pietra*, as in an ancient rite, the ancestral messenger by Arturo Lindsay set on fire a box containing all artists's signatures. A serpent of real fire came from the burning art box and set in fire my person just in the moment that I was burning my clothes of Plexus artistic director as in a modern sacrifice. This was not a sham metaphor. Plexus art slave market show was not only an art nonsense, *Il Serpente di Pietra* was really the first international art meeting in Sardinia of so many artists, outside the conventional and official 'roads' of the international art scene, without any pope giving credibility or/and advertising such event, and outside New York City, the most compulsory and important art shipping place in the contemporary art world, and usual stage of the past Plexus events. The presence in Sardinia of so many artists and scientists coming from so many different places free to have an open and critic dialogue with their work of art, working at the same time-space on the same subject/object (the serpent), it was a positive proof, a confirmation and support, for Plexus idea to use the metaphor of universal myths as a shuttle of multi-lateral art communication. Thank to the Serpent, Plexus became an international art network, produced independently by the artist in the first person. Plexus future is now responsibility only of the artist in the first person, as the winner of the art apple. Plexus artistic director now has been replaced by the invisible serpent with wings Ningki-Nangka, Plexus art co-opera n°5, the continuation of Plexus art journey toward Dakar, and toward a future richer of fantasy, freedom and equity. The artist in the first person is now the producer of the next second phase in the global project (1985-1990) of Plexus Multi-Lateral Recall Network: the production. *Il Serpente di Pietra*, following Plexus strategy, closed the first phase of promotion (1985-1987) to establish an independent international art community credit line for the artist in the first person and for Plexus art co-operas. Plexus art slave ship can and should become an art framework to develop, during its art journey, an international cooperation between all artists as art producers to negotiate a new contract of art, made by/for the artist in the first person.

Paper *Art Slavery*, published in *Passport for Plexus Serpent*, Celt Edition, Cagliari, 1987. Plexus is a framework for global art projects, its outlines of development are Plexus art co-operas, coproduced by the artist in the first person. These global art projects are a compression of time-space, myth, science, art and relativity, in which as in a modern rite, 150-350 artists and scientists are working together, tuned in a metaphor to celebrate and deconstrue. Plexus has coproduced three art operas: *Goya's Time*, New York, 1985, with the participation of 67 artists; *Purgatorio Show*, New York, 1985, with 350 artists; *Eve*, New York, 1986, with 220 artists; and one art co-opera *Il Serpente di Pietra (The Serpent of Stone)*, Gavoi (Sardinia), Italy, 1987, with 160 artists of 23 different nationalities. *Il Serpente di Pietra*, art co-opera n°4, was the continuation of the journey of an art slaves ship, travelling through reality and fantasy. During this journey Plexus has transformed artistically the ferryboat, travelling from the Italian coast to the island of Sardinia, into a Dutch slaves ship, toward Dakar (Senegal). Then, during the Plexus art journey, the Italian ferryboat was re transformed into the ship *Electra*, Guglielmo Marconi's travelling laboratory. A radio signal for freedom in art communication was transmitted, to dedicate the

Serpent to the Centenary (1887-1987) of Heinrich Hertz's electromagnetic proof, which materialized the invisible and revolutionised our daily controlled electronic living. Since 1982 in New York Plexus has developed a continuous activity in the field of interdisciplinary art research. Since 1985 it has focused its interest on the interaction between art and science, to produce Plexus art co-opera as a synchronized presentation of art & science concept-images. Plexus art co-opera has its roots in total theatre, jazz, international art fairs, scientific laboratories, happenings, Fluxus, and in the history of modern art. Plexus brainstorms universal metaphors like The Serpent. Plexus uses metaphors to create common ground between artists and scientists from various cultures with different values. Plexus uses all available art fields that interact synchronously among themselves and the relative time-space of each art co-opera. A Plexus atelier comes first and builds these art shows, through a brainstorm made by 'time-art' and 'art-logic' that tunes in the metaphor in deconstruction (the Serpent) all artists. From the megalithic sanctuary of Sa Itria (Gavoi) Il Serpente di Pietra has linked scientists and artists from many different part of the world, from Kassel to Sidney, Montreal, Wien, Wales, through a computer network of European and American universities, organised by the Dax (Digital Art Exchange) Group of Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh and the Department of Physics of the State University of Cagliari (Sardinia). Plexus will continue the journey of the art slaves ship toward Dakar, where in the past from the island of Goree the first slaves ships left. There Plexus will present Plexus art co-opera n°5, the invisible African Serpent Ningki-Nangka, to start again its art journey, taking the artists not any longer slaves to a new art world in freedom. In 1988 Plexus will dedicate the continuation of the journey of Plexus art ship to the centenary of the rotator electromagnetic fields by Nicolay Tesla (1888-1988), as a metaphor to celebrate the freedom for the artist in the first person to join the international art community.

Paper *The Metaphor as a Travelling Factory*, published in *Passport for Plexus Serpent*, Celt Editions, Cagliari, 1987.

The metaphoric language of art can be used efficaciously as an international and interdisciplinary system for a more qualified information and education if synchronized with modern science and coloured with universal myths. Plexus art co-opera uses the metaphor as a multi-category framework, as a crossing over between knowledge and unconsciousness. Plexus uses mythology artistically with metaphoric references to science and marketing that modernizes the myth as a "commodity symbol." The metaphor is an ultra-rapid integrated communication system. Plexus art co-opera has specific forms in relation to the geo-political conditions in which it is produced, and the artist in the first person is not only the producer but also the consumer and the final product in the of this modern rite. In Plexus art co-opera n°3 Eve, the artists, as slaves to be sold in public auction to the art market, were handcuffed together with their art works on board the art slaves ship, to underline that for them there is no separation between artist, art, and art community. It was to protest against the dynamics of the art market, imposing production mechanisms coming from the general market that are not those of art. Through critics, dealers, gallerists, mediators and other filters the image of 'the artist in the third person' has been created, to respect the needs of the star system, the hierarchic structure is more functional to the marketing control that is governing the world market of the contemporary age. Art should not be considered only an exclusive 'commodity symbol' for commercial trade, but a 'food' for our nourishment, a compression of high 'know how,' not exclusive, not expensive, to fly with our bodymachine outside limits and borders of rational worlds and controlled markets. The metaphor is an ultra-rapid integrated communication system. It works with nanoseconds (billionths of a second), the time-scale with which today our logic computers are operating. One nanosecond is so fast that it exists before its rational thought. The metaphoric language of art can let us cross the boundaries of specialist fields, working by

concatenated structures. Time-space, art, science, history, can only be compressed in a continuum in evolution, never consumed, only imperfectly perceived through their developments and jumps of discontinuity, as a serpent eating its tail act as self nourishment, which does not disappear consuming itself, but transforms itself continuously, recycling its matter. Official history with its ages and schools is not the measure of reality. The human being has modified with culture the rules of history, of its own natural evolution. To know the future is also to look back to the past, to arrive at the sources of our common roots, where the game of the metaphor can contain the memory of our lost ancestors. The metaphor of art can help us to see beyond the optical and rational horizon, Plexus can be considered as a mutant following its sociobiological evolution as a dolphin, member of our common class of mammalian that sees by means of its bio-electromagnetic sonar. Not understanding and not accepting our common nature, and at the same time diversity, created an antagonism that took root in all different levels of our everyday life individually and collectively. The loss of freedom for the diversity to cohabit with the homogeneous more organized majority has been the cause of conflicts between different worlds, with the continuous attempt at predominance by one identity over the other: the stronger over the weaker, the more rational over the less or arational, the white over the black or red, the richer over the poorer and Adam over Eve. Against this antagonism the pluralism of the Serpent metaphor has been deconstructed by Plexus to defend Human Rights against any discrimination, selection, racism and Apartheid. In Plexus, in which the artist in the first person coexists as an individual system with other systems, there is a common patrimony which is shared collectively, and the artist has to be aware of the inter dependability of each in the modular construction of Plexus art co-opera. Therefore Plexus art co-opera as an art project is consumed by human beings (artists and audience) and this consumption causes cultural and physiological reactions effecting their metabolism, and interacting between them and interlacing with the biocultural evolution. There is always an interaction between culture and nature. May be art is the gene 'nonsense' of our genetic evolution and Plexus can be the image of a researcher of the invisible, where however the invisible is a word and a world of modern science. The metaphor for its pluralistic interpretations is used by Plexus project as the 'travelling factory' for its multi-lateral recall products. Plexus uses rational and a-rational methodologies in a coloured framework of global vision and relativity to try to discover in which panorama the art co-opera, at the same time object and subject, is moving. For the 90's Plexus art co-opera should be considered as a materialized metaphor, and art should be produced, consumed and loved as a dematerialized food to recall our ancestral memory.

Paper *Plexus Multi-Lateral Recall Network Project, 1985-1990*, published in *Passport for Plexus Serpent*, Celt Editions, Cagliari, 1987.

The Webster Dictionary defines Plexus as a structure in the form of a network; as a network of interlacing blood vessels or nerves.

Plexus is a six years international art project (1985-1990), to develop a multi-lateral recall network, produced by the artist in the first person. "The artist in the first person" is the author and producer of its own project. Artists and scientists are the partners of Plexus, as co-authors and coproducers of this co-authorship art venture, through their individual projects, that flow together as independent productions in the global production plan of Plexus art co-opera. Plexus will promote, by a quarterly newsletter, exchanges between the coproducers, to establish an international art community credit line for the artist in the first person and for Plexus. The project uses the metaphor as a 'travelling factory' of concept-images to produce global art projects (Plexus art co-operas) made for the critic consumer of the material culture of the 90's. Plexus project is schematically divided by integrated phases of marketing mix: promotion, production, price, replacement, within short (1985-87), medium

(1988), and long terms (1989-90). Plexus coproduction structure, always in evolution, is represented in the Plexus strategy map as a truncate cone (the ancient nuraghic tower) built by the coproducers associated as in a modern rite. The participation in it is made by "art logic" and "time-art," through individual projects and independent productions. The first level of participation for an artist is to deliver to Plexus her/his own project. This first step will allow communication with other producers through the newsletter, operating as a shuttle of Plexus brainstorm and to open a credit line on that individual project in Plexus network. The second level is the re-elaboration of the individual and of the global project in relation to new developments born from Plexus brainstorm. The third level is to produce the individual project as an independent production. The fourth level is to be part of the global program, with phases of research, elaboration, actualization, interacting in the integrated concept of marketing mix for the strategic establishment of Plexus multi-lateral recall network, where recall means collection of concept-images and memory. In order to participate at the beginning to plexus network project it is necessary to recall the following: - participation in Plexus is made only by the delivery of a project whose the artist in the first person is the producer; - to deliver the project/product in the time-space with the agreed deliveries of the other coproducers of the Plexus art co-opera; - to identify the mutual goals and benefits involved in developing and establishing Plexus as an international consortium/umbrella of independent art producers; - to avoid the bureaucratic time-space of traditional cultural organization; - to learn to profit from the direct dialogue between artists and scientists without mediators or agents; - to plan a Plexus calendar for the next activities of common interest; - to learn to profit from the direct dialogue between the artist in the first person and private investors as 'angels.'

Paper *A Plexus of Serpents*, published in the *Plexus Newsletter* by Plexus International Art Urban Forum, New York, 1988.

Plexus is a symbiotic network born from the multi-lateral interaction of artists and scientists working together in order to survive. The Webster New College Dictionary defines Plexus as "a network of interrelating blood vessels or nerves." A Plexus co-opera is a mixed structure of interrelating parts, organic and inorganic, concrete and abstract, rational and arational, incorporated and non incorporated. The serpent eating its tail is the Plexus metaphor for the cross-fertilization of art and science, of knowledge and the unconscious. Since 1985, Plexus has been coproducing co-operas as synchronized presentations of art and science. Plexus taps universal metaphors such as the serpent. Plexus uses these metaphors to create common ground between artists and scientists from various cultures with different values. Plexus deconstructs and re-presents these metaphors as both artistic and scientific reality. Plexus is committed to the proposition that all people are creative survivalists. It believes that the art/science involvement of the individual can do more to promote an environment conducive to the evolution of creativity than all the machinations of an infinite number of public agencies. Plexus means any interaction of an interdisciplinary network ranging from fantasy and observation through discussion and reflection through demonstration and celebration and beginning again and again. Explain it: Plexus is a metaphor for recalled memories in a framework which works within a nanosecond. It is unity by repetition and reification. The serpent is the mutant.

Paper *Artist in the first Person: Mephistopheles*, published in *Plexus Newsletter* by Plexus International Art Urban Forum, New York, 1988.

The Artist in the first person is the artist qua producer, where the final product is the artist himself/herself. 'Mephistopheles' is the artist in the first person who abolishes any distinctions between art and artist. 'Mephistopheles' is also an operative tool within Plexus framework. It operates via "artlogic" rather than "rationality."

"Mephistopheles" is served up by the artist in the first person as nourishment to keep ancestral art memory alive. The artist in the third person, where the artist is defined only by reference to his/her market position and saleable commodities, is an effect of the modern art market, a hierarchical star system based on false notions of "marketability" and "rationality." The modern art market is a sacrificial system which obliterates the artist, leaving only a product. At the point at which art became alienated from culture and community, the artist, as artist in the third person, lost all art memory and became slave to rational considerations. The artist in the third person had to incorporate patronage, market influences and other interferences into the (inner) artistic process to stay alive. At its worst, these interferences defined the very discourse of artistic creation. Prior to the point of the alienation of art from culture and community, the artist, as artist in the first person, was able to consume and to be consumed by his/her own culture and art in a circular dialectic. "Mephistopheles," as an art opera of the artist in the first person, delves into lost art memory. As such, it flies in the face of market pressure. It places modern technology in the hands of modern artists as a tool for artistic excavation. Both art and technology suffer from the pressures of rationality and marketability. Modern art exhibitions, driven by the need for new products, fail to provide dialogue between artists and communities from which they have grown.

Text *Solar Plexus*, New York, 1989

The human being is made by a physical integrated system, a socio-biological organism absorbing and transforming "energy," that provides necessary ionic charges for its biochemical reactions. These ionic charges effect the recombination of many conductive chemicals in solution in the human body, during the physiological metabolism process from "Matter-Food" into "Matter-Energy." The ionic recombination supply necessary conditions for the human being to exist and to think.

Through networks of differentiated cells in communication together by interactive systems (Plexus or Chakras) this "Energy" is responsible of the biological information and its genetic transmission.

The human being like the physical world, with all its animate and inanimate realities, is made in space and time by ionic transformations of differentiated states of "Energy Matter." Our and their diversity in forms and behaviours in only a phenomenological effect of the relativism of the atomic crystal configuration on which the micro and macro realm of our reality is built. The human being's whole life is time-factored by energy configurations and transformations of the ionic crystal mask of "Matter," from computer silicon chips to the physiological sodium pump of human cellular membranes, from snow to rocks of mountains, from chromosome's DNA to skeleton bones, from eating to moving, from thinking to conversation. It seems that many factors of culture and biology are crossing over as part of a whole living organism, in which also the body and the mind of the Homo Sapiens are bio-interacting together and in interdependence.

Through "Art" as "Energy-Information", we may develop its own socio-biological evolutive communication system to perceive, beyond our current optical rational limits, the immunological code of more evolved information biological systems, such as the electromagnetic dolphin's sonar, mammalian beings like us.

"Art," as a sociobiological know how, can be the environmental radar for our future sociobiological navigation, as Marshall McLuhan foresaw, able to see beyond the linear -rational horizon of pragmatic schools or controlled markets. Albert Einstein foresaw Time as the 4th dimension of the curved Space, where, micro and macro, positive and negative, ying and yang, as well as two parallel lines meet in "Infinity." If "Time-Space" is "Infinity," may be there is where the logical binary system of the "concept of Art" will meet with the non predictable quantum of "Energy" crossing the phenomenological physical separation between "body" and "mind."

"Art" as "Energy" as "Time-Space" can be concised in one whole organism, in one vibrating non continuum quantum of "Matter," in Evolution, only imperfectly perceived and divided by positivist theories with its "Isms" or systems.

Time is now the 4th dimension. "Time-Space" has changed "Logic." One nanosecond is a billion fractions of one second. It is the time with what are working our logical computers, it is the time measured before to be able to think it. It is the a-rational time that exists before its thinking and its Cartesian dependence of "cogito ergo sum."

"Art," and "biology," have crossing over sociobiological relationships in which "Art" may be perceived as a form of "Energy," which is by Norbert Wiener's theory of Information is understood as $E = M \cdot I$, where: E= to Energy, M=to Matter, C2= to the speed of the light, I= to Information. If "Art" is "Concept," therefore is "Concept-Matter" then I can infer that "Art" is "Matter" "Energy" Information Concept. I can deduce that $A = M \cdot E$ where A is "Art." Then, because $M \cdot c^2 = E \cdot I$ for the Information Theory we can infer that A = I depending upon that c2 (the speed of the light) has nanosecond time value, therefore it exists before the rational thought of it and it gives us the freedom from the logical Cartesian heritage of "I think therefore I am." I call it "ArtLogic."

Text *Sgusi Kunto Kosta Plexus?* Cagliari, 1991.

May 31, 1991, travelling toward Carloforte. Dear Franco, "Sgusi Kunto Kosta?" (I beg your pardon, how much cost?) Plexus Art? The cause was Plexus Black Box. The result was Plexus additional value. "Sgusi Kunto Kosta Plexus Black Box?" (I beg your pardon, how much cost Plexus Black Box?) and which is the emotional and economic cost of Plexus in the contribution of the establishment of the 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium and of the various Committees and Centers under development? If I interrupted you while you were talking, and I am sorry about it, it was because first for my emotions in this particular time, but specially for my urgent need "In Order To Survive" to clarify publicly the economic, scientific and artistic values of the planned event of July 4, 1991, with enough quantity and quality of information to allow an optimal take off for the Elisabeth project and for its necessary funds-raising. In the middle of my interruption to you, Silvano Tagliagambe in a puzzled way, asked to me which was the additional value that I was speaking about. Thanks to these breaks off or intermissions we started finally to introduce the concept of value, additional in this case, in reference to Plexus. "Plexus Passport n°2" could become the vehicle to continue our open letters, to clarify the historical additional value that Plexus gained. It could serve to inform the Community without too much noise of the trajectory that "The Serpent" is following in reference to "what is the case," "what could be the case," and "what should be the case" of Plexus Black Box. "Sgusi Kunto Kosta" Plexus today after Gavoi, after the dressing event of the Elisabeth, after the delivery in Gorée of the first lot of art works? "Sgusi Kunto Kosterà" (I beg your pardon, how much will cost) to set down under the sea Plexus Black Box on July 4, 1991, in Carloforte? and How much will cost this quantity and quality of art? "Fire!!" this is the key word today, before and after Gavoi. On May 30, 1991, "In Order To Survive" was again the message, and if I interrupted you, it was not because I did not like the house's wine, but for my friendly relationship with you built on the work made together in all these years. "Sgusi Kunto Kosta Plexus?" It has not price. But it has an additional value which can be estimated year by year. Which is the value of Plexus will be a question that will be asked soon at different levels. The additional value will be clarified within this historical contemporary context, from the China's events, Saddam, Noriega, to the world marketing control for the 1992 Columbus event. What is the additional value of the first lot of artworks plus the second lot collected by Plexus in direction of the opening in Gorée of a World Art Fund for the survival of the Living Traditions in Art in risk of extinction? One plus One equals Two. This does not apply to Plexus. In

Plexus One plus One are synergetic and they create a causal interaction producing an additional value. Plexus is synergetic, it is living matter. But this is another story, look at "Physics of the Matter," "Aesthetics," and "Cybernetics." One plus One equals History of Art, which Art? Plexus Art! How the value of an art work is made? The cultural value is given by a basic economic law of demand and supply. The exchange value is modified by speculative operations of collectors and dealers who invest on that particular artist or, better, art movement. It gives more speculative opportunities in order to swell up the exchange of prices. "Il Cambio di Rotta" (The Change of Route) for Plexus could be to sum its cultural value with a new exchange value. For example, through limited editions of art works, "Plexus Money," "Plexus Stamps," "Plexus Certified Checks." For such purpose it is necessary to switch the exchange route with the market. Instead to be collectors and dealers to speculate on artists, Plexus should choose and invest on collectors and dealers like Franco Girina, who in the first person historically believed in Plexus, without speculations, in order then that they will turn to the market their additional values, made artificially - scientifically. How much is the value today of the art works given in 1987 to the collector Girina as value exchange to print the "Passport for Plexus Serpent"? Surely more than before. One plus One equals to? The photos of the installation made on November 9th, 1990, at Anna Saba's studio, with "La Treccia di Gavoi" by Micaela Serino, are still present in my memory, together with the intelligent exchange of eyes between us following our images game, built for the continuation of the historical ongoing travelling within the Plexus Black Box. But what is the value of emotions and information, compressed in that installation? It was supposed to become permanent, finalized to a journey toward the new challenge of "Plexus Passport n°2", in order to document the activities made after Gavoi, and before from 1982 to 1990. "Plexus Black Box", set down under the sea, will serve to give a significant signal for an acknowledgement of this additional economic and artistic value to Plexus that is defending so hardly for the artist in the first person, who made possible One plus One equals History, and to the establishment of an credit line for the International Art Community of Plexus. It is because of the setting down under the sea of "Plexus Black Box" that this intermission born, not attended. Franco, as David Ecker wrote to you in the already historical letter on January 10, 1990, "let's play with Plexus Black Box and bring all us to the enlightenment." Bring your Serpent and Nur will win. Anyway you were right about to not brake off. We loose in quality for the need of quantity. I hope that we could continue to deal with this dilemma in Vienna. Yours, Plexus 23s.

Transcript of his presentation at round table *Cultural Navigation and Community: The Lower East Side*, NYU Summer Institute of Living Traditions, New York, 1993.

De Leon: Sandro, when you came to New York from Italy, you blended long time after everybody-else landed, when you landed, you came to Lower East Side. How did you plug in the artistic vibes of the Lower East Side?

Sandro: My story was that in 1981 I moved in the Lower East Side, looking for a cheap apartment. I didn't know anything about how rich culturally was the community, because as Italian, I was related to SOHO, I was more related to Chelsea where Plexus was originally in Chelsea. And because of its cultural activities there Plexus ended on the street. The only place where I got hospitality was in the Lower East Side, in a basement of a burned building, a really incredible gathering artist's place, where I discovered the community. I see here many artists that they came from the basement, from The Shuttle Theatre. One dollar to get in, very tough to get in, because, we didn't want too many limousines outside on the street, because we should get in trouble with the Fire Department. At the Shuttle Theatre there was really an art audience, made by the same artists who were playing. Then I discovered what means to be in Lower East Side. Because I was lucky, I was lucky to have big mama as Ms. Sarah Farley, now she is dead. She was a community leader of the

homesteaders in the Lower East Side where there was a large quantity land with burned buildings that the community people, for their survival, was trying to recover, always in big fight with the Mayor Koch. She always stated that land was belonging to the people. "People have the right to live", she usually used to say. In this way I discovered the Lower East Side Community and how so was connected culturally. That brought to me to understand my roots and what means to defend your own traditions. Lower East Side isn't just a place for old or new immigrants. There was very rich, may be the richest, place culturally in New York. This is my relationship with Lower East Side. Culturally, very rich people.

DeLeon: How did you tie to the artistic tradition here?

Sandro: This is the story, my background is basically Avant-Garde and Jazz. Jazz was for us Avant-Garde and Jazz is Poetry. And of course as soon I turned on this side I met William Parker, Miguel Algarin and Micky Pinero. It was the time, 1984, when we made a call "In Order to Survive" all together in unity we made a call from the East 6th Street. Today we're recalling our history: on December 10th 1992, in the morning of the Human Right Day we met with Dennis deLeon at City Hall. In the evening, we're here in this same auditorium, with many others, recalling the community call "In order to Survive," because that was and is a crucial time, it was like now, there was no money, there was only art. Art is art relationship with the community. I saw many galleries coming Lower East Side, gentrifying the place. I saw NYU as a gentrification entity, I see now also how NYU, especially with this building Barney Building, and this art department, have an incredible opportunity to show our rich is the artistic and cultural scene of the Lower East Side. I would like to make a point. Here I am as coordinator of the Well Being project, I just came back from Italy, what we have here is very positive attempt. Every scene is moving finally to bridge the community and the institution to be committed to work together in the direction of well-being and reconciliation project. There is a calendar, program of activities that goes back to the first appointment, behind this first round table of NYU, at Nuyorican Poet Cafe. We are planning a series of important activities called "The Repatriation of Art into Community" The first was done within a collaboration between The Nuyorican Poets Cafe and Museum Modern Art of New York. Art must stay in the community, in the streets. The street is a beautiful incredible art space, so rich that you can go in the street and set-up a street show. We have a very rich art scene in the Lower East Side...Basically here on the table there is some kind of strategy. In the bottom of the flyer, the focus of the institute will be on "Community-based collaborative efforts to devise urban art education strategies." We had a meeting in David's office and the discussion was on strategies or means. Let's go back to strategies. In this case, it is very crucial to get a picture of the community, of the environment that really is not wealth. There are a lot of problems in the community. And the subtitle of "Cultural Navigation and Community" is "Art, Reconciliation and Well-Being." We know that recently on the New York Times there was an article about how the economic wealth measurement was modified by the presence of human rights and quality of life, that's called well-being. We're years working now in the direction of reconciliation and well-being, trying to understand the rule of art and in this case the rule of this department. Because of this department and of this building there are some sub potential results. They could be really used in the community, and the community can starts exchanges with NYU, let's say by starting with this Summer Program of the Department of Art and Art Professions. I spoke briefly before that I left for Italy, as coordinator of the organizative committee of the Well Being project. I know that it is possible to develop in a concrete way some international collaborations. In this Round Table, we have the Nuyorican Poet Cafe and Miguel, with an incredible place. It is really incredible to go there. Now what is reconciliation? Reconciliation has a big and incredible value, we have to start to develop in the community the framework

for this diversity on which can exist reconciliation. Diversity is prevarication sometimes. "I'm different from you," "You are stranger to me." If we are able to use art to create a reconciliation environment to develop the well-being we will save money for the City, and because now everything is economic, we need a framework, not so much relate to art production but more related to the development of a curriculum in Multicultural Art Education. The community people don't have time, resources and skills to articulate it. We are under the survival pressure. We can't wait too much. The Third Round Table that will end this Summer Institute will deal with the issue of Art Urban Education. If we will able then to develop a team to articulate the curriculum and the working project then there are more entities in the community that will, maybe, enjoy us. I am sure that CUANDO will join and supply what is identified in the general plan. This is a very complex plan.

DeLeon: Also the idea we want is outside governments or public agencies, we don't want to depend on from them. That is your point Miguel, we don't want to grow sole in government constantly. The government shouldn't be on our way.

Sandro: Let's say we should be able to understand how this Reconciliation Well Being Project has to be between institutions and community.

Antonello Dessi

Text *Multiples of Black*, Cagliari, 1992

Multiples of Black is a metaphoric journey through spatial metaphors of the West. Inside, there are inserted main knot points of Western culture. At the entrance, there is positioned the Mediterranean mother with two umbilical cords, one toward the top and the other toward the bottom.

Objects of Plexus Storage and of Plexus Black Box are channelled metamorphosed toward the symbolic representation of death. The spatial fulcrum of *Multiples of Black* consists in the inversion of spatial polarities of suspended bodies, among them a shoe peaks from which is pending from the ceiling a head and planets falling from top down, like to point out the research of the problematic movement of the procession of equinoxes.

Around the installation, it happened a performance by Lorenzo Pace and Patricia Nicholson Parker with an aesthetical intrusion by George Chaikin.

Stephen DiLauro

Paper *A Note about the Plexus Art Operas*, in *PLEXUS Recall 1, Passport for Purgatorio*, New York, 1986.

As a poet and showman nothing in my life to date brings such vivid and passionate recollections as the time of the Plexus art operas, "Goya Time," "Purgatorio," "Eve." Though the names of all the artists who contributed to these productions are listed within this volume, certain individuals participated in such a big way that I feel compelled to mention them here: Lawrence "Butch" Morris, il maestro; Gretta Safferty; Anita Steckel; Cowboy Ray Kelly, captain of the art slave ship; Miguel Algarin; Lenny Horowitz; Albert DiMartino; David Boyle; Joe Strand; Paolo Buggiani; Willoughby Sharp; and Sandro Dernini, art director extraordinaire. I have seen tempers flare, heard voices raised watched lust blossom and fade, enjoyed outstanding music, observed brilliant bursts of energy and artistic achievement and enjoyed the finished product - spectacles that are unique in the history of opera. One of the most amazing aspects of these operas is the extremely low budget on which they were produced. That such bursts of creative output were underwritten by a budget about the equivalent of a Trappist monk's annual wages attests to the

dedication everyone involved brought to bear. Brilliant moments and scenes leap to mind: the firing squad and clouds of smoke in "Goya Time"; the chaotic six floors of CUANDO being taken over for an artists' installation - from the sub-basement to the top -- with the roof representing the magnificence of Paradise; the Minotaurus emerging from the art slave ship as it sailed the seas of myth and history - the horns of the Minotaurus aflame and Eve appearing as Billie Holiday, walking Mefistofele on a leash. Now another opera is in the works - "The Serpent." It is with more than a bit a wonderment that I approach this strange admixture again. But approach it I must - just as the artists in these pages were compelled and attracted to our three previous operas. Onward, to Rome and the Serpent.

Text A Question to the Symposium on the Dematerialization of Art, New York, 1987
NYU ICASA Symposium, Tisch Auditorium, February 1987

Art has its roots in ritual. We have only to look at the works of early shamans drawn on the walls of caves at Altamira and Lascaux.

In addressing the idea of the dematerialization of art, aren't we really talking about ritualistic art which cannot be repeated or preserved, setting aside for a moment the question of documentation, which is really a tool for raising capital.

Take it a step further: the dematerialization of art is really ritual for the sake of ritual. Last night Sandro Dernini asked if when eating Campbell's Soup, we are eating Andy Warhol -- spoofing, if you will, the Christian communion ritual. This idea of concept of dematerialization as ritual is even further underscored in a performance, say, where 13 people gather to eat Campbell's Soup.

The soup has dematerialized into the stomachs of the participants and the gestures and words of those gathered have dematerialized into the air, not to be repeated again word for word, slurp for slurp. So the ritual dematerializes as it takes place.

Dance, theatre--these stem from a need to ritualize, or make repeatable, certain words, movements, gestures.

Another example, even more appropriate to the point I'm making raising this question with the panel, is the Plexus Art Operas, where hundreds of artists gather together to perform a theme.

Dance, theatre, musical performance and visual arts are all combined here with the central idea of a modern sacrifice--sacrifice being an art ritual, of course.

But the modern sacrifice of sacrifice, the end of ritual, really.

So in talking about the dematerialization of art, aren't we really talking about the demystification of ritual, the end of ritual. The impulse to include the audience, as in the happenings and the Living Theatre, is really the impulse to make shamans of us all, audience and artists alike. So, do you or do you not agree that the dematerialization of art is really art for the sake of demystifying, or even doing away with ritual, by making art?

Whose Serpent? Who Is the Serpent?

Paper *Plexus Opera*, published in *ART WORLD Magazine*, Vol. 13, n. 2, Glen Head, New York, December 1988

What is Plexus? This is a question I am often asked. The answer evolves as Plexus itself evolves. The "official" answer, as put forth by Dr. Sandro Dernini, founder of Plexus International, is that "Plexus is an international cartel of independent producers working in the first person." Be that as it may, Plexus at time has appeared to some observers to be no more than a series of opportunities for group photos. For me, though, Plexus is beautiful chaos from which new names, new faces, and a new art form is emerging - the art opera. These performance spectacles are, perhaps without originally intending to be, the realization of Antonin Artaud's theories for a Theatre of Cruelty - a theatre in which masks, dance, music and shamanistic ritual take precedence over "text." As a playwright this is not the type of theatre I am moving toward. I prefer a reliance on the text, especially when the

script is one I have written. But as an art critic, and as a man of the theatre, I find these extravaganzas fascinating. I am propelled to furthering this new art form, even though our outing here in Manhattan on November 3rd was a flop opera. On New Year's Eve this year, as a prelude to our production at the Pan African Arts Festival in June 1989, Plexus will present the world's first opera in the form of a parade - The Serpent. More than two hundred and fifty artists, musicians, singers and dancers paraded through the street of the isle of Goree, Senegal, from the House of Slaves to the Kilimanjaro Club. This was Act One of a concept in which opera, theatre and fine art come together to make a new kind of show business.

Text *The Closing of Plexus Black Box*, New York, 1990.

The closing of the Black Box at Teatro in Trastevere represents the end of an era. Since 1984, at the Shuttle Theater in Manhattan. I have known and worked with Doctor Sandro Dernini. Our collaboration led to spectacular theatrical art extravaganzas such as *The Artificial Time of Purgatorio on the Night of No Moon, Eve, Il Viaggio del Serpente*, and 1992: *Cristoforo Colombo Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte*. Now that the Black Box is being closed perhaps a moment of reflection is in order. Plexus, which Dr. Dernini birthed, became a focal point for hundreds of artists in New York and elsewhere. It was a long moment in the history of theatre and art. Nothing as vibrant as these shows has ever been mounted before or since. Costumed players, orchestras, choral groups, singers, performance artists, ballets and visual artists all came together to celebrate freedom of communication. As the Plexus dramaturgh and impresario, I was repeatedly amazed at the levels of creativity and energy that went into these shows. Exploring myth and history through artistic interpretation brought to life the theories of Antonin Artaud in a manner that perhaps even he never envisioned. Plexus art operas, or art co-operas as some called them, had a way of making the artists involved reach beyond themselves. The creation of a new form of expression required art slaves who would execute these art operas regardless of market considerations. But that was the 1980s. Now it is almost 1991. The art slaves have become the new masters of the art world. On October 12, 1992, I will present an operatic art spectacle. The expression "made in the 80s for the 90s" is becoming a reality. Both Dr. Dernini and I are working to celebrate the spirit of Christopher Columbus without glossing over the historical realities that some people find repugnant. Finally, what is any kind of opera without a diva, Sara Jackson, my wife and inspiration, is the new queen of the art opera. Without her love, encouragement, support and strength I might have given up my role as art slave without moving ahead to assume the cloak of a master. Dr. Dernini, carrying Plexus Passport 23s on *La Caravella dell'Arte*, has found his personal diva in Maria Pia. We are all moving ahead in life and in Art. *La luta continua!*

Albert DiMartino

Paper *Statement of Purpose*, in *PLEXUS Recall 1, Passport for Purgatorio*, New York, 1986.

We find ourselves in a time when white is black, and black is white.

Think of a word. How is it heard? The one you try all day to say the right way, searching so long to say it all wrong. As Dickens put it "it was the best of times, it was the worst of times, we were all going to heaven, we were all going the other way." So it is to-day. It's as though, we as a race are trying to understand the prime directive (Love Thy Neighbour as Thy Self). There are no static physical things in existence. That also goes for personal relations, group dynamics and time. In physical reality, something appears "static" only at a particular level. So it is with cultural consciousness and collective alternative aesthetics. Plexus is not something new, all through time the artists have always expressed themselves in the first

person. That has always been the alchemical element that has made art fresh and new to the culture of each progressing time. The perspective of the first person made the divine connection between the creator and every day life, so the artist in the first person became a political and economic commodity, who ruled more historical and cultural power. As far back in recorded time as we can go, all that was logic an illuminated thought was the artist in the first person. So, for as far as we stand now, we homo sapiens are still at the beginning of our time. With all of our progress our "state of the art" is comparatively nothing when matched to our potential. Since we left the enlightened naiveté of the garden we have felt the existence that the act of creation; be it making love, money, power or art has somehow taken up that empty space. Art. Being an artist was the only one of these tasks that the individual could do in the first person. Though art is created in the first person it is made for the observer, which is racial collective the human experience. This gestalt is the main racial evolutionary force, for though' time and experience seems to stand still when compared with the direction of higher creative social and spiritual evolution. Plexus can be the crystal to focus the light of this change through. The will to manifest this higher potential is not the "ego" in the first person, but rather the individuals conscious effort to harmonize with this evolutionary potential. We, as a race are at a crossroads with the advent of nuclear and even more horrific Tesla energy weapons, it can no longer be "business" as usual. It is the responsibility of the artist in the first person to create "alternative aesthetics" to perpetuate and positively re-enforce the higher evolutionary potential that our creation spawned. Plexus, as an international group of artists, is at a point to facilitate this step in higher aesthetically generated survival and evolution. It has been positioned in time and space with the responsibility and duty to make this change. To shirk this responsibility will be done at a high moral and karmic cost.

David Ecker

Transcript of his recollection as interview, New York, 1994.

I start by recalling my proposal The Voyage of the Elisabeth made in January 1990 and my art piece made for the Ganesh Dinner at Sandro's house in June 1990, on the occasion of my participation to the Plexus event held in Rome. My interest was and is in the distinction between physical spaces and virtual spaces. If an idea in any sense counts as art, that is the underlying issue. Whether a photograph is a document of or is art. It involves almost all postmodern art history. It starts back with conceptual art. It starts back with Rauschenberg, Jasper Jones, John Cage, and before, for the first time in 1910 with Charles Ives's Three New England Places, a complex musical composition giving the impression of separate bands marching from opposite directions toward the village square, playing different tunes. If you look at Plexus Black Box you have fragments and segments, something like Ives's piece. But the expectation they made up creates a whole of all, a total. Expectation in postmodern thought is full projections of how the things are in the world and it is very close to everyday life which is made up of fragments and contingencies. This is Plexus and it is only about contingencies, not planned but incidental. It looks like total confusion from an outsider view but it is not, and one thing is related to the other one and there is so much energy that really things get done spontaneously. Social chaos is a fairly typical event of Plexus, made up of acts and gestures performed by distinguished and not so distinguished artists and scientists, depending upon the contingent circumstances under which they perform. What happened in Rome at Sandro's house in 1990 is an example of Plexus environment, and a second example is my chance meeting with Giancarlo Schiaffini, the musician and composer, on the plane back to Rome. We generated a collaborative idea of an integrative music and visual performance, just by looking at his music score. Schiaffini has devised his own

scoring system, like a visual analogue, to compose music. I was not part of the original group which started Plexus. I was introduced to Plexus through Angiola Churchill and I served as doctoral adviser of Sandro Dernini. At certain point in 1990 I got involved because of my interest in the living traditions of art in Sardinia and since then I have participated in 3-4 Plexus events. Plexus for me is a coalition of artists, engaged in different ways with many divergent modes with art, coming together to work on short term projects, without any unifying agreement on political or philosophical meanings on Plexus, without any unifying terms. Over this time my grasp of events beforehand ranged from a total misunderstanding or a total confusion of what is happening just like everybody else to some sense of direction. And that is what you can expect from it. Periodically everybody felt confused and each role got confused. On other occasions I felt I understood what was happening. The project Well Being originated from this context, in Rome in 1990, with Prof. Carlo De Marco, at that time Dean of the School of Medicine of Rome University and Sandro Dernini. The project gave relevance not only to the goal of scientific and physical well-being but also to the artistic and aesthetic dimensions of the well-being in the Twenty first Century as a measure of the health of the artists and of the societies in which they live.

Paper *Cultural Navigations*, presented at conference *The Well Being in the XXIst Century*, Carloforte, Sardinia, Italy, 1992.

The Christopher Columbus Consortium was established in New York City on March 10, 1989, by an international group of individuals interested in creating a series of projects to mark the 500th Anniversary of Columbus's landing in the Americas. Participants at this formative meeting included professors from several universities, and representatives from community and cultural organisations. The idea of a kind of "cultural navigation" arose out of this initial discussion, the notion that what was required of us was to re-think the significance of Columbus's landing in the light of a new global awareness of interdependence. Further meetings generated a veritable "fleet" of proposals. One of these proposals, made by Dr. Sandro Dernini of Plexus International, is now reaching fruition, a Reconciliation Forum to address the question of what will constitute well-being in the 21st Century for all the inhabitants of the globe. I should mention that our focus on well-being was the result of two preparatory meetings in the office of Professor Carlo De Marco of the University of Rome in January and June 1990. I should also mention that the lovely setting of San Pietro Island as the site of the first Forum was not an arbitrary choice. The members of the Christopher Columbus Consortium felt that this particular location would have deep political significance. For many of us, the initial idea of cultural navigation led quickly to the question of cultural identity. And for geo-political reasons, what better place than to locate our deliberations in the center of the western Mediterranean Sea. San Pietro Island was selected not only because of the amusing story of how Columbus allegedly altered the ship's compass to mislead his crew into continuing on his intended course to Tunisia. More seriously, Sardinia provides a symbolic setting for fresh attempts at reconciliation between the peoples of the East and West as well as peoples of the North and South. The question of the cultural identity of Sardinia itself poses a challenge. The nutritional, social, ethical and economic aspects of well-being will undoubtedly receive critical attention in the proceedings of the Forum. But surely the artistic and aesthetic dimensions of life as we live it must figure in any formulation of a comprehensive vision of well-being. The arts make visible our cultural identity and provide a direct measure of the vitality of the culture in which a particular art object or event is embedded. It follows that the arts have a special role to play in relation to the well-being of the members of each of the cultures of the world. For one organization represented here, ISALTA, it is not enough to document the arts in their cultural settings, but to take steps to enhance the arts and thus the quality of the lives people lives. The name of this

intentional group states its purpose: The International Society for the Advancement of Living Traditions in Art. Historically, artistic decline accompanies the loss of cultural identity. The felt need to preserve the meaning of a tradition in modern life is directly proportional to the loss of spiritual and material well-being of the artists and artisans sustaining their own cultures. Western solutions to the world's misery, suffering, and destruction have tended in the 20th Century to be technological and humanistic, whereas earlier they tended to be religious or political solutions. In the name of science, human nature, or God, the assumption underlying these solutions is that they transcend culture and have universal efficacy. In contrast, we believe that the very meaning of "doing good for others" is culture-bound, as is the word "art". Cultural crises, whether caused by natural or man-made, whether caused by forces from outside or within a particular culture, are ideally to be resolved on the terms set by the affected culture. What this ideal suggests is that there should be no "privileged discourse" in multicultural exchanges. Communication on both "inside" and "outside" understandings of issues affecting well-being in the 21st Century must be encouraged from all cultural perspectives. The Forum should provide us with just such a human context.

Frans Evers

Transcript of his recollection as interview, Amsterdam, 1995.

I think in the first place I found my participation very pleasant. It was an adventure and I like adventures and I also like very much to travel with a goal, with an aim and not being a tourist. It's very good being in Rome to meet artists from all different aesthetics and options and media and to be able also being invited to relate some of my theoretical works. I was glad that we could in a small kind of unit coming from Holland finally find five people from Amsterdam out of which three participated in the exhibition as well as in the parade we made around the Coliseum and also in the Metateatro. I have a very good memory of the Meta theatre because there was a very vibrant atmosphere which showed that there was an audience for this which really became very interested to learn what it was all about. I remember Sandro giving a speech about the painter explaining about his painting and some other people commenting on his work and there I gave this contribution about the Berlin Wall and the colours coming off and the sound of this very strange double iconoclastic process as I described it. I was very intrigued that such a complicated but very realistic social story because this only had happened a few months before was so good to communicate with the Italian audience who had gathered there and that, for me, gave the kind of rewards that there is in a much larger field a new awareness of aesthetics arising in which the arts are related in one way or other to what's happening socially and the social dynamics are so enormous nowadays that you hardly are aware of the intensity. That we will only see when things are slowing down again and become freezing which maybe happen in a number of years but I expect that this kind of dynamic probably still goes on for another ten or fifteen years at least. So we don't know in what processes we are involved. Therefore I found it very interesting to be faced with Plexus which was one of the few art forms who is still wanting to try to make visible one of the waves in the ocean of Willem. The concept of the open form in music was in fact worked from the beginning of the 50's until the end of the 70's when John Cage started his "happenings" in which musical compositions were not completely prescribed to the musicians but in which based on a few basic givens like numbers of times a certain sequence should be repeated the musicians themselves were allowed to create that piece of music. So completely unexpected and new material came on the moment when the music was played, and which was only partly predictable. that was a kind of form that was later on in the 60's extended to the visual arts when in Fluxus Nam June Paik and all the

other people involved like founder George Maciunas started to work with their also sometimes called "happenings" and sometimes like the Germans they called it "Aktionen" in which different artists collaborated together in a performance. Interestingly the performances in that time mostly had a basis of deconstructionism or sometimes even destruction of pianos or instruments or other traditional instruments. They wanted to bring in electronics like the tape recorder, television sets, and all kinds of new constellations were made in which there was no longer any difference between music and sound. The concept of music was open to all kinds of new sounds which were allowed in the musical idiom like a "liberation of sound". In fact all these expectations were created early in the century but in the 60's they exploded. In fact the open form is a kind of exploded form, an exploded fugue of different things happening at the same time, but without any really powerful person directing exactly what is going to happen. It is much more based on agreements or the rules of a game which are accepted by everyone that is involved. With this as its goal, and to achieve this goal the composer could not write his notes anymore, but started to develop graphic notations in which configurations of different groups of musicians were placed but what they had to play was not determined so the basic principles were to allow certain kind of randomness in the happening. The personal influence of the artist was important which resulted always in unpredictable events. There are indications, but an indication can be of a very different nature that can be simply a symbolic almost painting-like structure which the musicians are to translate. So a kind of translation of visual cues or signs into auditory cues and signs and the predictable outcome of that is a kind of piece which is much more determined by sound structures and timbres than by pitch sequences or by dynamic forms but other composers did not use paintings; they started to work by introducing numbers and quotations, or like John Cage did use I-Ching to achieve at this kind of openness of the form by introducing elements which were already existing as a context the most famous example of Cage is the piece in which the pianist is sitting for a few minutes and just doing...not touching the instrument. As the audience you become aware of the sound that is always around you...ecological sounds, for instance and in that way also breaking the limit or the boundary between what is considered music as in you might say a sound environment which at least Cage tried to show as a discontinuous area which is connecting those words and you will find these connections when you open the form. And there is juxtaposition. It's rather abstract but it simply means placing objects in relation to each other in a space. But it's an important theoretical term because it is one of the ways in which different art forms can be connected. to put them opposed in one space. instead of just only bringing them together in one so called emotional or musical line. The first time we came out with the modular construction December 30 1984, it was Willem Brugman met me at a place in New Haven where I used to live and where Willem came in with a group of artists presenting an exhibition of paintings of the father of one of the artists Dimitri Rimskys and then I was introduced by one of the people who was shooting the exhibition with a video and then a collaboration started which resulted in few week in a show which was called Under Permanent Construction which was in fact based on a number of different story lines that was the Rubayat of Omar Kayam and another story line was Dream of a Madman , Dostoyevsky. Then Willem found out that I had brought out from Amsterdam nine music cassettes made with a group of local Amsterdam artists under the name of ROYGBIV and in ROYGBIV there was an attempt to work with the electronic medium in an improvisational way and so that in the show they were brought together and the extra stage design made by Uri Stern, a local architects who were Israeli who lived in New Haven and had followed courses at the Yale architecture department but he wanted to change his career in the direction of theatre. He brought into the theatre many beautiful constructions which were in fact reconstructions of existing materials which he had collected from all

kinds of spaces... demolition sites... the show itself was an enormously interesting working project- very condensed and also very new to many of the people. So, when the show was done we were sitting together to see how we could make a re composition of the videos and the materials which were used in preparing the show. In that discussion I started my first deep aesthetic communication with Willem Brugman explaining the background of ROYGBIV music. The fascination with colour; the relationship to Dutch colorism like in abstract arts of Piet Mondrian used those primary colours and forms and then, all of a sudden, Willem popped up with a visual artist from Switzerland called Richard Lohse. He was an artist who, in the Post World War period, was one of the few artists who continued to work in abstract expressionism and he connected his work to the serial approach of the composers. And what was the composers idea in those days-to have a kind of democratic or equality between musical parameters. Like pitch-they wanted to compose with that as a separate parameter, volume was a separate parameter, but also timbre was a separate one, and musical space. So they had to find out ways to bring together those parameters in a system without hierarchy- and there, I think, the connection comes into this use of the term of the modular construction because that was our fascination- how can we present the materials of the show without giving the dominance to text, without dominance of image, without dominance of music- but how to present it in a way that people could observe the process...that was the fascination I think- and one of the learning aspects of the projects in New Haven was this whole experimentation's with open form which in fact it was what we did. But as soon as you go at it you have to think about hierarchies- so we went through all the video tapes that Dimitri had shot- and finally decided that we did not want to show the edited video results- but the process of editing. And therefore this project of December 30 was called Image Edit. And here it is described as a video documentation of an environmental project of Dwight Street and a creation Under Permenant Construction and the arts hall will be used to present a total view of modular constructivism as a realized concept. The presentation of video as an integral part of theatrical experiments with guest speaker Dr Loek Verbeke from the Free University of Amsterdam explaining the modular construction and using a some words by the painter Richard Lohse. He made this statement " a systematic sequence of these registrations is activated in such a way that the dynamic formulation is achieved and that organization of principles arrange themselves in this process. The structure is unlimited and only receives its formal value through the presentations of tapes." Richard. P. Lohse: on the modular construction. Modular construction starts with an acknowledgment of all the elements that are involved in a process, very detailed, very specific acknowledgment. If I am allowed to use the metaphor of cooking here...when you start cooking you will go into the kitchen and you need a stove you might need an oven you need a light you need gas or you need wood. Then you have to get the ingredients that you will start cooking with, and then you have to get your pots and pans you have to get spoons and so forth. And, within the analogy of the kitchen, you can say the modular construction starts with the preparation of all the different ingredients that you need. In our case, and today that hasn't changed much the modular construction takes place in liminal space: in a space which is in between- because we don't own this space. We actually don't even hire this space- we use this space for a limited time. So - I've made a metaphor about cooking- about the kitchen- the acknowledgment of all the different ingredients now, the next thing that is more than ever important, when you look at modular construction from a multi cultural perspective- it means that whatever the contribution is going to be from whatever perspective its coming no perspective can be dominant...all the perspectives have to exist simultaneously. So modular construction, now in the 90's also involves synthesis of all the different ingredients and also involves synchronicity. I think that what has happened in the past ten years

is that a modular construction is now more than ever possible to understand if you use the concept of synesthesia....that all the senses , together, create an extra sense experience and this is the objective of a modular construction....that if you put all these different layers together, in a transparent way by which you superimpose them on top of one another so that space and time gets shared by all the individuals so that the individual does not lose its characteristics, but joins larger energy fields. My particular interest is that modular constructions work on a psychic plane of peoples. So these collaborations take place under modular construction brings us in a way back to concepts of total theatre- to concepts of total energy- or to "Gesamtkunstwerk" which is a concept that is borrowed from music theater- perhaps especially Wagner- but other people were active in that as well. So the modular construction has gone into any space and any time. Here also we can make a link to the concept that later related to our working collaboration, and that was the strange word of "ethnoreality" but which is, in fact, not so much a construction as an awareness of all these different drops of culture which are now becoming integrated in a bigger collective but we also faced still the fear of many of the cultures to make that step. and therefore we still face all these tensions. But to comment on that situation it is so important that in art forms examples are given of constructions of elements which are allowed to express themselves in democratic way. there is place enough for all the different tastes, colours, sounds which an individual or collective of individuals will make and we are now facing the situation - in fact this comment was made soon before or soon after the Berlin Wall dropped- we were connecting here in Amsterdam for a kind of national party and brought together a number of people in front of this statue we made for this ethnoreality celebration showing that it is possible to bring together in a few hours thirty or forty nationalities, different colours of the people together and this is the situation we are living in- which is a complete contrast to not only thirty years ago- there were only a minority of colored people in Amsterdam and now in total number it is a majority- over fifty percent- so this process we have faced in the last few years is such an enormous social impact that therefore it is very important that in the arts that these kinds of energies and energy frictions especially because we also agree that in this process it is not going about making equal by killing or taking away- that's easy, yeah- but by recognition of the different forms these energies are going to be confronted with each other and they form the new binding chemistries that come out which is still the example of the kitchen is very good - every little pan is having now its little different atmosphere and finally it has to result in a good meal- coming together in the stomach. Maybe it is interesting to quote Kandinsky at this point because my research has shown that for this whole problem of the relationship between the arts especially Kandinsky has made, in about 1910 or 11, a fundamental statement in which he completely broke with the Wagnerian approach of Gesamtkunstwerk there was already a wish to bring together the music, the singing, the dance, the acting and also the stage design- but a main characteristic of that approach was that in all the different lines of the media always the same movement was followed- so when the music started to speed up the dancers were running faster on the stage and the scenery changed quicker. Which, in fact is a nice result, but its only about intensities growing. Kandinsky commented on this when he gave his utopian vision on what he called the monumental theatre and it was a kind of art form in which three layers would be dealt with in a completely equal way but in an other aesthetic way than Wagner. The layers were physical movement, musical movement and colour movement. He said - when you make an approach- in all these layers the same motion pattern is followed then you only get the kind of effect in which the sensory intensity is intensified. But as soon as you go about making one of the layers opposed to the other, so that when the music is going faster but the dancers are freezing in a still- then you get a new kind of relationship - a juxtaposition between the art forms in which new

experiences come which some people call alienation - other people call it- hey, this is a new perceptual space: contrapuntal.

Leonard Horowitz

Paper *Plexus Introduction*, published in *PLEXUS Recall 1, Passport for Purgatorio, New York, 1986*.

What you feel and see is your own creation. We have created a new interactive art movement. We are called PLEXUS. I am labelling it: "Mytho-Compressionism".

This book represents, in a flat compressed version, the hopes, visions, poetry, music, dreams of hundreds of artists. This book represents a small scale version, a special history of four operas. These Co-Operas were and are the personal visions of Art History, of Francisco Goya, of Purgatory, of Mythology trance-formed into a simultaneous Tableau. Here, we have compressed history, re-created mythology. Time has speed up and there is no time left for aesthetic distance between the artist as performer and the Art Observer. In these simultaneous Co-Operas we have destroyed this distance, and they in turn interact, creating a new operatic form. We have extended the compass of vision to include the former observer as participant. We are user friendly. Use us or lose us. We are all independent thinker and dreamer collating our collective visions collaboratively. Please experience us wisely and with an open heart. This is open ART.

Text, from the announcement of *Eve* art opera, New York, 1986

"....Eve takes place on a mythological art slaves ship and is performed by more than 200 contemporary artists handcuffed together in an journey between reality and fantasy ending when.... Eve sits between Adam and God in the Sistine Chapel....The Marlboro robot arrives with the key words: 99 cents for a 200 artists Art Opera created and produced by all the artists together to establish an international art Community Credit Line and to establish SWEAT EQUITYNext fall the art slaves shuttle ship will cross the international sea to arrive in the bronze age of Sardinia in the summer 1987.

Paper *Plexus Art Redefinition of a Campbell Soup Can*, published in *Plexus Newsletter* by Plexus International Art Urban Forum, New York, 1988.

On Saturday, February 20, at 7:00 PM., Dr. Sandro Dernini organized an historical and aesthetic "Art-Ritual" in and around the Olympic swimming pool at CUANDO. (CUANDO has been the New York Nerve Center and Plexus Performance Cultural Center since 1985, including the three Co-Operas Goya Time, Purgatorio Time, and Eve). "An Art Redefinition of a Campbell Soup Can" was the theme song for the performance in the pool and was orchestrated by Dr. Dernini as a "Plexus Process Piece" to commemorate the first anniversary of the dematerialization of Andy Warhol. The inspiration for this Art Ritual was two Art Symposia organized by Jorge Glusberg and Angiola Churchill of New York University, both co-directors of the International Center for Advanced Studies in Art (ICASA). Dr. Dernini has previously performed his dematerialization event at Patricia Anichini Gallery on February 18, 1987. A phenomenological inquiry was the nature of the event and is at the same time intended as part of the on-going Plexus process. A phenomenological inquiry in this event takes on the true meaning of art as and in the process of becoming, by allowing it to happen -- giving first a basic overall structure and then allowing the participants to complete the work by collective interaction. In the swimming pool, Loisada samba Band, a Brazilian percussion band led by Tony, snaked and serpented their way through the assembled artists, setting the sonic under and overtones, resonating and reifying the room with their atavistic, basic beat. At the apex of the pool, Dr. Dernini performed his ritualistic "Art Altar" piece by the deconstruction of a Campbell's Soup can. In fact, a whole case of Campbell's

was ritualized and reinvented by placing pennies on the cans and painting them crimson red, blood red, sacrificial red. We have sacrificed King Warhol's very persona on the Art Altar to recreate further meanings and to extend the compass of art by our collective creativity. The Art Altar was ritualized by the Plexus Process of the "Group Shot." The ritual Group Shot has a life of its own and acts as both process and documentation, a moment frozen in time intended to expand, compressing Art history into Pasts, Presents and Futures (Picasso's most important process). This process of interactive compression and expansion of time was dramatically demonstrated by the attending artists. Wes Power, a New Age product designer and ecoastrologist, aided Dr. Dernini in the construction of the Art Altar; international artist Helene Valentin waved her red Serpent flag; Franco Ciarlo displayed his Artboat sculpture; Anita Steckel exhibited her "Winged Woman" in flight from the Empire State Building to the Sistine Chapel. All this was framed by brochures and posters of past ICASA Symposia and by a statement by Gianfranco Mantegna about how "art must be subversive and sensational." All activities were videotaped by Giuseppe Sacchi and Franco Castro and will be distributed by Fran Duffy, producer of Snub TV. Lorenzo Pace performed a shamanistic ritual by transforming the torch of art in the same symbolic way that the Olympic torch has been rekindled throughout history. Voodoo music was performed and percussed by Brazilian Sidney da Silva and his Paraphernalia drum beating. The Group Shot was further ritualized by Lynn Kanter, dressed as Marilyn Monroe, who pictorialized and Polarized the event and then displayed her immediate "photo-feedbacks." Renate Landenberger, German photographer and ecology activist, photographed all of us for posterity, or however long photographs last in our universe. After the Group Shot, Barnaby Ruhe, world champion of boomerang, opened the case of Campbell's and imprinted each case with the Plexus logo. Frank Shifreen, original Terminal Show organizer, painted pennies with the ritualistic red of the evening. Then, Jamaican fashion designer Twilight distributed the Plexus cans to the audience, free of charge. The evening's performances ended with artist and art critic Leonard Horowitz dancing the Art Applejack and the Charleston. Thus ended the first episode of The Deconstruction of Andy Warhol's Commodity Symbol, with Love.

Text Compressionisme, New York, 1989.

I first experienced 'compressionisme' in the Spring of 1985, where I was suddenly engulfed by a "Total Theatre" environmental spectacular Opera called "Goya Time," a continuous and extremely compressed dramatization of three paintings by Francisco Goya: "The Nude Maja," "The Royal Family," and "The Eight of May." This avant garde "Co-opera" was conceived, produced and directed by Dr. Sandro Dernini, an accomplished biologist from the island of Sardinia, in collaboration with Gretta Safarty and Lawrence "Butch" Morris. By dramatizing these three Goya paintings and having this cast of Goya costumed artists literally run through the audience, it destroyed the normal sense of separation of staged theatre, since all at once you were not only the observer, but a participant. In order to really catch the total and unexpected actions taking place, one had to constantly shift one's view from the Royal family on the balcony and further physically follow their descent through the amazed milling crowd below. The Royal Family pushed their way through the packed gymnasium, past thirty artists doing their simultaneous versions of the Nude Maja, and brushed past me, almost knocking me down. The whole spectacle was tied together and totally reified by modular music created and conducted and orchestrated by Butch Morris and further amplified by the dancing of Gloria McLean and company. The whole Opera lasted an hour chronologically ...but...psychologically seemed to be over in ten minutes. So we can say that because of the concept and the simulsensuous presentation, that there was an intense compression of time, of events, of experience, of total unexpectedness. If one agrees

with the theory that art should contain elements of surprise, then this plexus process and operas by Robert Wilson, by Meredith Monk and the Ontological-Hysterical process of Richard Forman is that Robert Wilson, Meredith Monk and Richard Forman tend to suspend time, to Surrealize it, and certainly in Robert Wilson work, to stretch time into a suspended "Dream State," a psychedelicate state. If we have been subconsciously influenced by the motion picture (and now television), as I believe we all are, then the obvious differences between the plexus process and especially any of Wilsons masterpieces (Einstein on the Beach) is that Robert Wilsons oeuvre has a strong sense of slowed motion and Plexus has the quality of Pixillation, of jump cut, of extreme compression. A Polish mathematician, Klaus Wyborny, working in Hamburg, Germany, a number of years ago (and using a timing devise on his camera), automatically pixillated frames from Citizen Kane and compressed this famous film into three minutes! The result is a very short film that compresses the images to the extent that the people disappear and the images are transformed into an atomic type mushroom cloud with a peculiar black dot that seems like an insect flying in and out of the cloud. This is a transformation of the original classic into a totally abstract process and sculptural vision. And that has been the Plexus Process, whether we have dealt with the theme of Dante's Purgatorio, with the symbolic universal Serpent and with Eve in the Garden of Eden. The very idea of "Modern Art" has to do with this 'compressionistic' process, since time certainly speeded up psychologically and physically for the French Impressionists, who invented modern art by: Improvising, by having a speeded-up moment to moment interaction with the last brush stroke and with the reified overall effect. They did it to the extent that the real subject matter of all modern art becomes the process itself, and any visual subject matter really becomes a vehicle employed in this amazing compressionistic process. (The tail wags the dog). No painter who has been sensitive and aware of "Whats been going on" has failed to be positively influenced by this direct improvised process. If we draw a line from the cubist space of Cezanne, we can extend this modern compass through Picasso and into the New York School of "Action-Painting," the so called Abstract Expressionism, especially early DeKooning. We can draw another line from Gaugin through Matisse and into Colour Field painting, into more interactive colour-shapes in space. This flattening out of the picture plane not only compresses space, but... returns it to a universal 'primitive' sense as envisioned by Gaugin and even Mark Rothko.

(If you have a guest and a host, then you have a GHOST... Marcel Duchamp)

Transcript from his presentation *Plexus Compressionism Process*, CUANDO, 10 March 1989.

Plexus Compressionism Process is "a quick shorthand, is jazz compressed in a magic music art form, is no time to move, is a nanosecond, is one plus one equals three, is speed up time, is creative process, is Plexus process, is computer chip, is critical mass, is yang no ying.

Note to David Ecker, *Compressionisme*, New York, 1989:

Compressionisme is caused by time speeded up in our unconsciousness. We are constantly compressing and fusing new forms, larger yet more complex forms from old ones. Modern art fuses the conscious with the unconscious so impression plus reification plus process are added to the dynamics of art. It is a new fused form. Picasso, using this new form fused the past with the present. We now have so much information that we are compressing it digitally into tiny computer chips capable of scoring billions of bits of info on a tiny compressed chip. All art forms are compressions, in that they use a unique shorthand to arrive at their metaforms. A 4 line haiku can express eternity. One plus one equals three. The plexus process is to combine, fuse these art forms. So we are fusing fusions, compressing compressions into a larger, more complex, more powerful network. By 1992, we will have

gathered enough compression to explode intercontinentally (North America, Europe, Africa, South America).

Ray Kelly

Transcript of his recollection as interview, New York, 1994.

We have to go into nature, to work in different areas behind abstract structures in painting, in sculpture, in architecture, in times and future spaces. Bucky Fuller inspired me by putting together art and science forms in packaging structures, with energy, with language. Art is a way of life, it is a way of understanding. Art is something else from money, and from what bullshit is presented usually. Art is the future which can't be controlled. It is in the air without wires. Art is free. The artists are part of the structure which the power system is trying to push out. Liquid forms vs. square lines.

Arturo Lindsay

Text *The Ancestral Messenger's Conference Report*, Atlanta, 1990.

On July 2, 1990, with an audience of artists from Europe, Africa, and the Americas, Plexus convened its first international conference. The panellists consisted of Dr. David Ecker, artist, director of ISALTA (International Society for the Advancement of Living Traditions in Art), co-cordinator of the 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium, professor of art and art education, New York University; Dr. Okechukwu E. Oditia, artist, member of the 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium, professor of art and African History, Ohio State University; Dr. Arturo Lindsay, artist, scholar in residence, Franklin and Marshall College, Plexus-Atlanta, assistant professor, Spelman College, Atlanta; Dr. Frans Evers, artist, Plexus Amsterdam, professor, Laboratory of Plastic Sound, Royal Conservatory, The Hague, Holland; Mr. Fabrizio Bertuccioli, artist, Plexus Rome; Mr. Frank Shifreen, artist, Plexus-New York; Mr. Ciro Ciriaco, artist, Tempo Irreale, Rome; and Dr. Sandro Dernini, coordinator of the 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium and originator of Plexus. Each panellist made a presentation regarding his research, work and or vision of Plexus's future. Along with a discussion of my work with remote control drawing tools, as the Ancestral Messenger of Plexus, I assumed the responsibility of opening our channels of communication by providing each artist in the Plexus network with my vision for Plexus and the enclosed mailing list. My vision for Plexus is to see artists use this mailing list to invite each other to work on international collaborative projects; and to share ideas and resources. I encourage my fellow panellists as well as every member of Plexus to make use of the mailing list to directly communicate with us. I have added to the list of participants at the conference in Rome, the names and address of several other artists who have participated in previous Plexus events. Please forgive any inaccuracies in the mailing list. Misspelled names and address are largely due to my inability to read the artist's handwriting. Please type or print clearly all corrections as well as names of artists who were omitted and forward to Dr. Arturo Lindsay. I will update the mailing list once a year, or as needed, or as funds allow. The Ancestral Messenger "Definition" of Plexus: the following is a more concrete description of the proposal I presented in Rome. Beginning with a biological definition of a plexus I propose we built an art definition of Plexus as a metaphor. As you will note in the art definition, I have written in italics (originally in bold) letters the transformation into metaphor. Biological Plexus The communication which takes place between two or more nerves form what is called a *plexus*. Sometimes a plexus is formed by the primary branches of the trunks of the nerves - as the cervical, brachial, lumbar, and sacral plexuses - and occasionally by the

terminal funiculi, as in the plexuses formed at the periphery of the body. In the formation of a plexus the component nerves, then join, and again subdivide in such a complex manner that the individual funiculi becomes interlaced most intricately; so that each branch leaving a plexus may contain filaments from each of the primary nervous trunks which forms it. In the formation also of smaller plexuses at the periphery of the body there is a free interchange of the funiculi and primitive fibres. In each case, however, the individual filaments remain separate and distinct, and also do not inoculate with one another. ART PLEXUS The communication which takes place between two or more artists form what is called a *Plexus*. Sometimes a *Plexus* is formed by the primary branch (*Sandro*) - as a *Co-Opera*, a *Purgatorio Show*, or a *Christopher Columbus Project* - and occasionally by *local Plexuses*, as in the plexuses formed in *Amsterdam, Dakar, New York, Rome, Sardinia, Milano, and soon Atlanta*. In the formation of a plexus the component *artists* divide, then join, and again subdivide in such a complex manner that the individual *events* become interlaced most intricately, so that each branch leaving a plexus may contain filaments from each of the primary *aesthetic* trunks which form it. In the formation also of a smaller plexuses at the periphery of the body there is a free interchange of *artists*. In each case, however, the individual *artist* remains separate and distinct, *maintaining his/her own identity*, and do not inoculate with one another, *losing their individuality*.

Paolo Maltese

Paper *An Infinite Serpent*, published in *Passport for Plexus Serpent*, Celt Editions, Cagliari, 1987.

Einstein once stated: "The most beautiful experience one can have is the mysterious. It consists of fundamental emotion, the cradle of true Art and Science." And the poet, Mario Luzi said, "Science accepts the idea of mystery rather than repel it. For a poet, the mysterious is a place from where to return to rationality, and from which doubts stem." If today, philosophers have been beaten, artists continue to fight the mysterious, while great things are happening in Science, as presocratics, once used to do, following E. Zeller's time-scale. Mystery-Reason: the artist at the confluence of these ever-changing words. PLEXUS is therefore a metaphor in which observations, analyses, discussions, reflections, actions, pilot-shows, stretched to encourage the continuation of research, all come together, and like an infinite serpent rising up to tree of knowledge, renews unity and consistence to self-conscious and common research. In this way, by adventuring into mists of metaphor, myth and archetypes, one is brought closer to the mysterious since the metaphor is enemy of appearance, is the damp earth, and is the roots. Behind it lays the mystery of the future, the continuation of imaginary threads still be defined and fully elaborated, as PLEXUS looks for. Thus, PLEXUS project does not set itself easy objectives, so in an Event of such vast size as that of Gavoi (Sardinia), and based on very ambitious goals, (but also still very uncertain), the danger of rhetoric, indefiniteness and superficiality continually remain a possible trap. At this point Cicero springs to my mind, who used to ask himself, how soothsayers managed not to laugh when they met each other. The Gavoi opportunity has been useful, useful because it allowed contacts and feed-backs between artists who came from different areas, and who did not know each other. Among these were the inhabitants of Gavoi, a town in the centre of the Barbagia of Sardinia that accepted what could be defined as being - for Gavoi - a challenge. It was an important occasion for the inhabitant of Gavoi to reflect on what to do in the future, just as for PLEXUS to find proof for an interdisciplinary dialogue, got out from the usual artistic contexts (and scientific). This is the point I should like to emphasise: that what happened in Gavoi could become "History," in other words it could be the catalyst of reflections for everybody, for PLEXUS, thoughts which in

their turn produce more thoughts and future realities for everyone, all in a continual spiral (the serpent), toward a future growth which is "History."

Maria Pia Marsala

Transcript of her recollection as interview, Rome, 1995.

I started to know about Plexus in 1987 in Rome during a press presentation at the Teatro in Trastevere. Slowly in 1989 I became involved as performer in 1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte, an art opera held at the Metateatro in Rome, in which I played the role of the Black Princess. My participation was signed fully by my strong emotions and my passion to be an artist in the first person, with my own individual expression, within a collective work progress. Plexus was an occasion for an artistic experience of confrontation with the others participants, performing and acting human life, within the whole context of life. My participation was an improvisation performance in which I played with all my emotions and impressions in a stage within a closed space, aware of the Scheckner Theory on performance. It was difficult for me to express artistically, in an harmonic way, myself as an artist, as I had learned until that moment as dancer and actress. There was no stage direction, there was no support of any kind to help us, to express ourselves. On stage everybody, as artists in the first person, performed their own personalities as acting characters, often in conflicts with the other's one, representing the complex theme -The Voyage in the Planet of Art - as an interaction of different human beings with different points of view. Fully interactive were our meetings, before and after the show, with everybody, journalists, artists, scientists, writers, curious, to discuss their and our opinions about how to arrive to "Il Pianeta Arte" as the only meaningful way to understand what we were doing there. We had several hard discussions and usual characteristics conflicts among all us, but these tensions created new energy, materials for interacting with that show, which we developed in the Plexus events performed in 1990 and in 1991, and since the recent ones. We kept alive our intuition, during those discussions, in order to go deep and deep inside ourselves, to open our eyes, our hearts, our minds, playing, as only children can play, with total love. My experience was strongly lived and it is related to my own individual experience as a researcher of true global love and harmony. I would like to recall as a meaningful part of my continuous experience with Plexus Black Box, from its opening performance in 1989, in Rome, at Metateatro, until to its closing in 1993, in New York, at the Rosenberg Gallery, that in Plexus there are not visible elements which oblige you/us to use intuition to feel them. Like for example, when in 1989 at Metateatro Plexus Black Box hold surreally a music note played by Giancarlo Schiaffini inside a container representing Plexus Black Box, and then all of us moved through "la porta del cuore" with a magic word: "I am" and by our own name. We ended that performance by a liberatory laugh presenting to the audience a Plexus Campbell Soup Can as an artwork.

Luigi Mazzealli

Text *Open Letter to Sandro Dernini*, Cagliari, 1988, translated from Italian by the researcher:

Dear Sandro, in decoding your "Plexus Strategic Map", doubts surpasses certainties. It is a good sign. Plexus Manifesto, opening itself, as the graphic which express it, on all spatial directions is a sign of these times. I would wish it were less. Many suggestions fascinate me (the international circuit of art managed by the artist in the first person; the myth as the re acquisition of the artist in a world from which was alienated; the metaphor as travelling factory; art as gratuity and opportunity of

intersubjective exchanges behind the specific of the artistic language; the relation among artists of different nationalities and cultures etc. Nevertheless as I said questions and perplexities are not few, starting from the problem of the organization. The hard experience of Thelema, taught me that when a specific community of intellectuals and artists who sets as essential support to their own relationships a "freedom request," it must know to develop at the same time a balanced form of organization (or not organization) if it does not like to have painful experiences. It is not easy. From "the Manifest of the Communist Party" of 1848 to the freedom requests of the student's cultural revolutions of 1968, the need of free human exchange, in the concreteness of its own historical development, repeated one thousand times under diverted directions the centrality of the patriarchal organization from which it tried to get free. There is a reason of course in this fatal repetition of the historical experience. Probably the need to canalize creative energies of community members and to counterbalance together centrifugal pushes made up by libidinal impulses and or by individuals' power addressed unwarily to the ruin of the cohesion and of the collective projectuality of the community, it brings fatally to the opponent side. In other words a balanced form of coexistence between CENTRALITY and FREEDOM, from the point of the organizative view, does not have a satisfactory answer in history. This should let understand to have not too many illusions when this problem again shows itself: we know that also a non organization under any title shows up itself may generate monstrosity not less than a centralized organization. About this point it should be opportune to discuss for long time in the group, we should force ourselves to have a constant reference to our praxis to not allow ourselves to go out of the roads more or less by purely verbal suggestions contained inevitably in the hypothesis package of the departure. And nevertheless, there is no doubts, the request of freedom is an essential condition of how art poses itself and to which anyway it is necessary to give space. To repropose with strength this need, Plexus is right. But the point that for me, in this moment is urgent, it is another. It regards a very controversial question for which Plexus paid until now a high price. In the Plexus Manifest among others, there is this statement "Art is where is and not what is" which has a great conceptual density. I cannot exclude that because of this reason, it easily allows misunderstandings if as I am afraid this concept is connected for relationship more or less close with the DADA praxis. We have without doubts in the Appointing of Duchamp its more direct historical reference and the more probable reading key. As it is known the appointing represented in the history of art a decisive jump of quality which brought to the extreme consequences the lost of the linguistic specificity of art already started with the Cubism and the functionalist movements in early years of the XX Century. Through the appointment to decide of the artistic value of a given object or given event it is not anymore its historical linguistic specificity, contained no separable in its inner formal structure or if you prefer its aesthetic quality, but the simple "additamento" (appointing). Therefore it is decided by the person who officiates the object or the event in which it is placed. Rather than it is decided for it by the generic artistic intentionally of whom is officiating the rite of the "additamento" or of the "re-knowing". For example the mythic urinal of Duchamp was artistic because it was out of context respect its original environment and out of function regards to its use value. That is it was placed in a place (an art gallery) already by itself "deputato" to confer licences of artistic value to any kind object which was exposed intentionally within its walls. Naturally with the appointment the artistic object loses its intrinsic use value and of communicative, relational, semiologic exchange value, if you wish, when you like. But Duchamp did not invent anything: already since long time before the commodity colonized this new realm of art. In other words, the aesthetics, the value, the thingness of the work, the original and intentional meaning of the message, the QUALITY and every thing else we used to associate to the work of art

were reduced from this moment to little less or little more, in a sigh. Amen. After such an event of this amount we are not worried if the line opened by the new praxis of making art, the object of art loses all its linguistic and communicative autonomy while it grows at the same time the importance of the intentional act of the maker and its existential weight. The object is just little more than an opportunity to insert breaking occasions by the officiant on the scenery, sometimes with all the weight of his body presence (think to the Body Art for example) therefore the subject takes the place of the object. "L'Arte é dov'è e non cos'è". There where there is as we saw its officiant who puts off the rite of commemoration "corpore presenti" (present body) for its premature disappearance. Have we to interpret in this way recent Plexus performances in Sardinia with what more flatly revival was reserved by the neodada practices: from Poor Art to the late experiences of Land Art and that was possible to find? I am afraid that to motivate these ways of making art were in some ways the same theoretical papers of Plexus which probably because they are necessarily crowded within a contracted form in a very short space offer spaces for more current interpretations or if its allowed to me for some "boutade" very chip in the second hand market of the "americanerie". Sincerely the steps of Plexus Manifest that I am going to quote behind the fact that are rich of poetic suggestions and clearly linked to urgent and concrete problems they do not contribute to leave out some doubts while anyhow they solicit some kindly ironic shafts: "The live TV news becomes the only acknowledged reality in the world." "The individual must make himself fitting and predictable if he hopes for a place in a world where every fantasy has found its justification." "Whoever engages in art-making has to adopt toward the present time the attitude implied by the concept of the artistic work's gratuitousness. Art is the "need to exercise humanity" without hoping for fame, without falling into worry about the future and into anxiety to succeed, to grow attached to a piece of work, to suffer the limitations of reason, to lose sight of life. "The artist today..., mustn't make use of his imagination only in the making of his work. He has to use it also in his everyday life,... thus accepting other people's creative energies as well as his own."

Assane MBaye

Written recollection, Dakar, 1994, translated from French by the researcher.

The Living Plexus Black Box: Art, Well Being and Reconciliation. First, I would like to thank the GOOD LORD and his son Prophet MOHAMMED to have allowed figuring the name of our venerable religious chief, founder of the Mouridism CHEICH AHMADOU BAMBA on the page of The Living Plexus Black Box: Art, Well Being and Reconciliation. I make to the memory of our deceased brother and friend Langouste MBow a compassionate prayer "Earth be light to him", for all activities of Plexus Dakar. Bring Your Serpent. All life is a mission, to not say that it is a personal effort within the whole society, little or large. Cheik Ahmadou Bamba in his time has been a high reconciler of esprits and culture. During his exile of seven years, seven months, seven days, he wrote seven tons of litanies (khassayide) rich of metaphors all centered on the GOOD LORD, the Prophet and on the man. We learn that the real war of the man, it is not "Le Djade" (The Holy War) but a truly fight on ourselves. "Work, as if you never die and pray, as if you have to die tomorrow" (Cheik Ahmadou Bamba). We thank you a lot Cheik Ahmadou Bamba. "SA DJAN WATHIANA" is diction in our Wolof language, a metaphor which means "your serpent is descended." It is a custom to say it, after to have accomplished a good mission. Dr. Sandro Dernini we thank you and we give you the power and authorization to do what it is right for a good realization of your honourable mission. SA DJAN WATHIANA. The events to which I participated in the project of Plexus International are in effect multiple and different, both in idea and in action, realized with many difficulties, without money, with hard and very limited wealth

from our side. It is at the cultural center Malic Sy, Dakar, during a conference made by Dr. Sandro Dernini with the participation of the director of the Italian Cultural Institute, where I had my first contact in 1986 and 1987 with Plexus International. He spoke, with an American-Italian accent, about the electromagnetic serpent and of science, by which I was delightful very much that day. It was from the departure of that moment that I started to work very hard on the project (Bring Your Serpent) "Time-Art Ningki-Nangka," the metaphor of the serpent, Plexus art co-opera. With a great surprise by the artists of Dakar, I saw myself to be invited in Italy. I would like to say, that I always dreamed to go in Europe. The dream was concretized, I was with 160 artists of 23 nationalities, arrived on July 4, 1987, in Sardinia, Gavoi, for the first international market of slaves of art, "Il Serpente di Pietra". Plexus Art Co-Opera n. 4 was held in a megalithic sanctuary at the center of the Mediterranean sea, the hearth and as well as the lung of the Western culture. It was linked by an European and American group, Dax Digital Art Exchange, of Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh (USA) with the intelligently equipped computers by Prof. Franco Meloni of the Department of Physics of the University of Cagliari in Italy. It was from the departure of this first experience which allowed myself to travel beyond the frontiers of our country and of our continent that I was motivated to enforce the activities of Plexus International in order to be able to continue the art Co-Opera N. 5 and consequently to arrange better in direction of the FESPAC 88 of Dakar, which sadly did not happen. In December 1987 after my return in Dakar, at the Auditorium of the National Institute of Popular and Sportive Education, at the Stadium Iba Mar Diop, in Dakar, we organized a round-table about the theme "The Popularization of Art and of the Artists of All World." It was chaired by Dr. Sandro Dernini with the majority of the guests made by artists with the presence of Abdoul Magib Dia, representative of the Mayor of the City of Dakar, and of Prof. Youssouph Traorè, president of the Club Litteraire David Diop, who introduced the debate. It was a date which has to be kept in the history of Plexus because we have done a good departure in direction of the City Authorities of Dakar. Dakar-Plexus behind to be a strategic point between North and South and New York, Sardinia, Rome, Amsterdam, Dakar-Plexus movement goes to bring its serpent with a large "S." Goree is the symbol of a suffering history, the slavery and the Negro trade made the opening of the Atlantic sea and the invention of the "New World." All has begun from this, (door without return) today, as you say, we want to pass the limits of space-time, in the research of new dimensions throughout the ocean of art with new means of communication and of science. This voyage reintroduces us in an adventure without limits. Dakar-Plexus invites you to travel with its own history. In the House of the Slaves, Goree, on August 26, 1988, we launched an open letter to the artists of the world to announce the arrival of the ship of the slaves of art, which was previewed from December 23, 1988, to January 3, 1989. In the context of this encounter the artists have been invited to participate to the realization of the Art Co-Opera N. 5 "The Electromagnetic Serpent Ningki-Nangka and the Exile of Cheik Ahmadou Bamba", a synchronized and simultaneous presentation of art and science. It will be realized under the form of a parade spectacle in the island of Goree, in occasion of the second event of Plexus International, with a ritual ceremony made by the recovery of the sculpture of Arturo Lindsay, buried in the sacred land of Goree. It will give a great homage to the memory of the Diaspora, against racism and in the name of freedom of art. We wait with a great hope the international fond of art under the flag of universal reconciliation and we wait the arrival of the real ship of the former slaves of art on board the Elisabeth.

Text A *Brief Radiography of Plexus Dakar*, Dakar, 1990 translated from French by the researcher.

The experience that I had drawn within these two past years, from 1987 to 1988, is made upon a radiography, this means upon an analysis and a diagnosis on the

gathering of situations which Plexus has met with us in Dakar, within an open circle of people, unfolded to the world, but also insulated, where Art saw the first day of its deep roots. Africa, nest of the Civilization of the Humanity, seems to be forgotten or not well understood by our confreres of the North. If we today should accept Plexus as a miraculous system of communication for the development of cultural exchanges within different cultures for the benefit of an Universal Civilization, it should be necessary, in the beginning, to take into the account relationships and essential means of these different cultures which reflect themselves at the level of their own current development toward more the Western culture than our. I think well that Plexus is a nice and good Western or American idea. It is an apple which comes from you, but not from Africa, and Plexus is not the sun with thousands rays. It is the reason by which Plexus looks to us "dephase" elapsed or badly understood by the group of Dakar or for the default of an organization plan or still rather for the harmful consequences of the FESPAC 88 which finally was dropped out by the organizers. What was left was only the improvisation by the side of Dr. Sandro Dernini. In effect it was failed to do anyway something in the place of the FESPAC, this created to my opinion a big misunderstanding within the artists of Dakar. The information did not pass within them, they have not absolutely understood anything, they were fixed more on the level of personal complaints rather than on the artistic and scientific expression of Plexus itself. I pull off your attention, dear friend, on the very fragile resources of the artists of Dakar, they have almost nothing, and they lay as misunderstood in the little city of Dakar and in Gorée. They have fear to adventure themselves abroad within new systems of artistic expression. "Slaves of Art." Another point need to be underlined which is that of information and above all of the communication, because we have a problem of times and distances, which it makes the use of communication very expensive in Dakar and which asks a great capital of money. To my opinion these are somehow the very important factors to be kept in consideration in reference to the Black Box and to the future of Plexus, in order that the Government or goodwill people of Dakar may give their full contribution, without difficulty. I pull off your attention, one more time, dear friend, to make you understanding Africa is an old and tired land that needs help to go up psychologically and materially. Anyway these two past years for me have been rich of experiences and they allowed me to know my own mistakes in the field of public relations, and above all on the plan of organization and method. I have the feeling that you are our privileged partners which was concretized by your great contribution in artistic matter which never will forget and which will constitute for us a treasure, a force, a motivation to communicate with the rest of the world with peace. Without to forget your presence, your daughter Valeria in Dakar, at Gorée, and the forever presence of your excellent and invisible Anna Saba who will always rest with the precious stone of our deep memory, inspiring us for a better exposition of tomorrow, without forgetting other people and artists of Sardinia.

Paper *Le Serpent Ningki-Nangka*, published in *Passport for Plexus Serpent*, Celt Editions, Cagliari, 1987.

Plexus invites you to travel to Dakar through a journey of the mind of our times by the invisible Serpent Ningki-Nangka into the fog of the metaphor, into the animism, the ancient Negro-African religion that is not by magic or by fetishism, but by an authentic African way to communicate to the Universe and to spirituals forces. This vital energy is only an emanation of the divine power and manifests the African inner sensibility to be able to feel animals, stars, the moon, the sun and everything in us and in the world fully in mutation. Ningki-Nangka is a compression of time, space and of relativity, between East and West, South and North. It is a metaphor, a star of poetry, of epic song, of art, of music and of light. "Un arc en ciel" coming from the richness of our soul built on the vital strength of our faith. For the name of Winnie

Mandela, of all oppressed, of all women, for all children, for love and peace. From the tam-tam the sun of the new world will rise.

Kre MBaye

Transcript of his recollection as interview, Dakar, 1996.

Plexus is a tendency in direction of the universal of the civilization. It is a way to put together all people, it is a tendency to watch what happens in this planet with a consciousness of what happens, with no separation between the world and the human being. Plexus is not an organization, it is more about a philosophy, a thought, a proposition, a view on how we deal with the issue of the human being. It is a tendency in direction of the unity, against any definitions or classifications which make separations. Without unity, in the respect of the diversity and quality of the human being, there is not democracy.

Franco Meloni

Written recollection, Cagliari, 1994.

PLEXUS = kB ln W. When the hopes seemed to be still compatible with a normal life, the distinction between Art and Science seemed surmountable after a careful definition of terms. Difficult, but not impossible. PLEXUS had the useful characteristics for a research with joyful aspects. We played without well knowing which the stakes were, and there always are. We had to look for personifications to be followed in order to cover a role. The scripts weren't always respected. The subject was fleetingly indefinite. The scientific matrix was proved by many rationality peaks. Acting in history - either capital or small letter - we could feel the possible implications. The different potential openings regarded problems thought in solitude but discussed between many. And all of this, unavoidably, seen with eyes more and more tired of human errors. We needed greater synthesis efforts in order to define PLEXUS. Art and Science was not enough, Freedom was imperfectly vague, Artist "in the first person" made one think at barren personalism, Antilibretto brought back necessarily to previous experiments. But the accidental or wanted interaction with others forced to change the relations with the outside, or the inside, that regarded us. The solicitations were strong, but had to be supported both by a credibility and by a continued research of transforming stimulus. Now the game was seen from the inside. In the series of fleeting focalizations of PLEXUS, it seemed necessary a further definition of one's own outlook on the problem. Having necessarily to put together scientific concepts with Art images, it seemed inevitable to run back to the one period of human history about which judgements agree on estimation of values: the Renaissance. It was possible because of the genetic connections to identify in the problem of the Flagellation paving reconstruction a way to deal, in an apparently operative way, with the combination of different cultures. Not being enough Piero, we wanted further on to represent one's vision of the problem with a kind of stamp what would define PLEXUS once for all: kB ln W. The operation seemed completed, the explanation left to others. Definitions are always incomplete. To imply in equations concepts that regard multiple interactions, requires an ability of synthesis, and a comprehension that usually is out of the normal experiences. Physics teaches that simplicity, refinement and wealth of some formulas causes an almost sensual pleasure in dimly seeing the route that had determined its concise completeness. It would be as looking at a river's mouth, while going up the water-course to the source and seeing the reflection of every single wave. The problems are always very complex and it demonstrates a human but not always verified need, wanting to delimitate them in enclosures rationally or

schematically defined. PLEXUS is consequently hardly definable. The interaction is complicated by the presence of necessary and fundamental human factors. If it is difficult to give order to the atoms, it is incredibly more complex to deal with feelings. And PLEXUS is full of these. It is impossible to analyse it from the inside. The position in the scenery requires that a physicist - after all a man of science - expresses itself according to schemes that the others are expecting from him. In this situation, forced to explain tangibly my role, I had necessarily to give the clearest possible idea of the reason why I was interested in PLEXUS and above all the way I thought about it. Avoiding an abused broadcast-fascinating language, I thought that entropy could be used: an image-creating-image happily used many times in physics. Once more a concept apparently known is used to introduce the problem. Like other times entropy is useful to lead the way to reasoning that will later develop along routes before unforeseeable. Then in a particular scenery - and here the explanations would get entangled in skeins of the previous experiences - we enunciate the equality between a thermodynamically important quantity - a real solid bridge between the microscopic and the macroscopic - and a movement that involves different competencies and interests. Very nice picture. But unsatisfactory. For many reasons: because the definition is good for closed systems; because the molecules don't think and people do; because it is impossible to measure the thermodynamic probability of a dynamic system with a variable density outside a laboratory. But, even if the formula is not true, it is interesting to see its limits and the possible alterations, or only the criticism. The system is not closed, and it would be absurd if it was. Therefore the inquiry is shifted in a field even more interesting - Boltzmann will forgive me - of the preceding one. We enter in the complexity's world, ruled by laws of the chaos. Fascinating. Therefore we draw advantages from a wrong initial statement. Beside we can understand that an immediate transportation of concepts and valid definitions in the severe field of physics speculations in different environments can cause some problems at least of consistency. But this is positive if we see it as an increase of the limits of language validity. But how it is possible to extend concepts out of one's existence world, when we know that even in the whole of relevance exist some undecidable sentences? After that the undertermination principle was surmounted with enormous labour, we relapse inexorably in cruel limitations of the Godel's Theorem. But, as well as the Heisenberg's Principle shows the limits and the contradictions that derive from wanting to transfer directly - without any verifications of compatibility - concepts valid for the macroscopic world in the microscopic one - so different - the Godel's Theorem deprives us of the last great certitude: the separation between the rational: Mathematics, and the non-rational: Art. It is not so easy to surmount the difficulties derived from the apparent absence of the first points. In Physics we learned to live together with concepts distant from common sense, and then why shouldn't they be so? In Mathematics we got the reassuring certitude that the scientific research will never have an end. The metastructures refer to the research of new box opening combinations connected tighter and tighter in a continuous research that finds its reason from the same existence of complexity. But it is true, and I believe so, that the most important thing is the way and not the goal, the discussion of formulas, of codification, of definitions, is after all more important than the subject of the research itself. The Art & Science does not exist, but it is fundamental to talk about it. PLEXUS is a box, more or less big, contained in another one distinguished with difficulty from it. Nobody knows its exact dimension, but it is possible that his entropy, and his energy also, is potentially very big. The connections are more important of the content. PLEXUS as entropy and therefore as information. Piero della Francesca as the vision of the Global Man. 1492 not as the death of Piero, but as the year of Lorenzo dei Medici. The political vision as a means that allows information to have

the power and the duty to circulate without any filter. If this is urged by PLEXUS, it is not essential to give it a closed codification.

The Pupil asks: Master, is it possible to define PLEXUS? The Master answers: PLEXUS is in you. PLEXUS is out of you. One of these answers is undecidable. September 1st, a week before Sarajevo.

Paper *Global Navigations*, published in booklet *The Well Being in the XXIst Century* by Interdepartmental Well Being Center, University of Cagliari, 1995.

Global Navigations. A name that inspires spaces, borders and possible targets. A name that represents a step in the evolution of an attempt to compare different cultures and peoples. Any of them with a proper character, to obtain a vision more complete to solve some problems always present with their fascinating complexity. The big discovers and the reached aims make confident in a possible progress of all the social components through a progressive improvement of our way of living. But if an insight of the new poverty fixes one dollar as a daily resource of billion people today, with which false security is it possible to face the solution of an equal distribution of the richness when enormous differences concern the lives of a lot of people. The methods, the weapons the determinate will to act can and must come from the right components though of as critical consciousness of the society. First among them the University, for the knowledge that should represent and for the mixing of cultural relationships that could realise.

Art should have the same importance if we think that only with a complete connection of reasons and feelings it is possible to realise unthinkable projects. For Art and Science is written on the main entrance of the Cooper Union School of Architecture in New York, and the memory goes to the speech about the freedom of slaves by Abraham Lincoln. In the same sense of this speech, supported by reason for a fair human cause, the research trail of the right instruments to modify and to interpret the reality around us must be based on a scenario that can change name, and from PLEXUS we can arrive to Well Being, but must maintain coherently the route that through tracings in the mind and in the time not always linear, takes to the definition of the proper responsible role in the life.

Paper *Mail Computer Serpent*, published in *Passport for Plexus Serpent*, Celt Editions, Cagliari, 1987.

A system which transmits information without intermediaries, conditioning, or censure by any power whatever, where a fact may be presented as it was intended by its conceiver, free from encumbering interpretative explanations - this is without a doubt the most productive weapon against the frustrating solitude of every author. And the system does exist: a network of computers which connects the knowledge-producing centers of the whole world. It can be the most useful way to not only exchange data but to close the gap and make ties stronger between all those interested in culture-related work. One of the most wonderful experiences during the Plexus Meeting in July was meeting artists already "met" through the electronic mail system - the VAX at Cagliari's Department of Physics. There were people from DAX - Digital Art Exchange of Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, along with poets who had transmitted ancient legends from Australia, while Kassel and Wales were on the line. And all this in Gavoi, Barbagia (Sardinia). The world can be smaller, not only in the field of Science, but, and perhaps with better results, in the field of Art as well.

Text *Paradox*, Cagliari, 1989.

Any serious consideration of PLEXUS must take into account the distinction between the objective reality, which is independent of any theory, and the physical concepts with which the theory operates.* A. Einstein, B. Podolsky and N. Rosen, *Physical Rev.* 47, 777 (1935)

* (Physical Theory, in the original...)

Why to use a fundamental article at the basis of the unsolved questionable dispute between the probabilistic exponents of the Copenhagen School, and the deterministic scientists, Einstein *et al.*, to introduce a discussion concerning PLEXUS? To gain credibility, for example. And because of the intimate fashion that I see looking to problems involving few definite positions and many possible developments able to augment our desire to implement connections between different domains of knowledge. The most exciting and sometime appealing question I have ever heard in these two years of activity in PLEXUS concerns my position as scientific entity in the not-ever-clear artistic movement. Generally, - What is PLEXUS? and what is your position in it? - is a very intriguing statement, mainly because of the complexity of the answer. I have tried many times to avoid a clear definition, but a night, forced by Sandro, a kind of equation came out in the form: $PLEXUS = kB \ln \Omega$.

There is a strong influence in this late-night output due to my old love for Boltzmann and for the implication that the true formula, where $PLEXUS = S$, the entropy of the system, had for the developments of Physics in many directions. It is very easy to connect the statement to many concepts in some way related to PLEXUS:

- i) there is the sense of the whole system as composed by separate but important parts: the artist in the first person;
- ii) there is the answer concerning the system as open or not, and the consequent entropy increment, with or without critical filters;
- iii) there is the close connection with the freedom of and in communication, Shannon relations of 1948 defining information as the difference of entropy before and after a message, and PLEXUS concerns also information;
- iv) there is in general the relationship between order and disorder;
- v) there is something of artistic in the definition of non-deterministic entities, in a sense exciting as von Neuman said on the term entropy related to information: "...no one knows what entropy really is, so in a debate you will always have the advantage.";
- vi) PLEXUS needs creative concepts, and with logical Ralston matrices also a little of statistical mechanics may aid to increase the number of connective sensations among us."

Text, *letter to David Ecker, Cagliari, 1990:*

Dear David, it is a pleasure for me to continue our long-distance dialogue on some common arguments of interest. In a sense, PLEXUS means connections and transmission of knowledge. In particular, remembering once more the absolute necessity to connect our places of work by computer electronic mail, I want to continue to play with the Black Box. First of all, we must give a definition of it. The Black Box has been created in order to survive. To survive against the complexity of the problems that made uncontrolled the route toward a common goal. To survive against the egoism of many of the participants to the project. To survive against the responsibility of the ambitious target, more or less future. To survive against the fragmentation of the different objectives of PLEXUS. In this way, the Black Box, represents a quiet place created to discuss the situation according to a scientific method. But, is it possible to do it? Clearly not. To go back to play, I think that it is denied by arguments based on Godel considerations. To be clear, for the fact that the Black Box is a superstructure of PLEXUS, but all of us are contemporary in the two. And seems that the process should go to infinity in creating spirally involved superstructures. It is impossible to assume a position totally external, in physical and in human sense, that could allow a scientific, unperturbed and unperturbing vision of this - but not only this - reality. This is a problem concerning the thesis work of Sandro too. His job is practically impossible to be brought to a definite end for his intimate involution in the problem. It is like a kind of symbiotic process between PLEXUS and Sandro that makes hard to individuate the subject and the object of the analysis. And this is strongly exciting. It resembles some situations in the interactive

process of the measure, according to the quantum mechanics, of microscopic entities. Now, how to solve the problem? In physics we proceed by putting in an organized way the results of the experimental tests. For the Black Box we need, first of all, to create a chronological order in order to fix some well defined coordinates. And this is what you suggest for the Sandro's thesis. All the possible developments should come as a consequence of this first task. We must then collect our energies to meet together to find the right answers for our problem.

Okechukwu E. Oditia

From " *A Guide to Oditia's Map of Knowledge-360°, Study Research Practice on Traditional / Contemporary African Art*", Columbus, Ohio, 1991.

...Analysis of the art uncovered the reactions of traditional African artists toward a set of beliefs and practices. This enduring, religiously-compelled behavior pattern, together with its concomitant artistic and aesthetic properties, was characterized by a reciprocal result, namely, art through the life cycle of a traditional African.

This art started from the traditional African who recognized in himself as an obvious finality. The African, in this manner, assumed himself to be constructed to live forever (as seen in his belief in reincarnation), put into the world to perpetuate himself by procreation, while using such devices as art to bench-mark each specific stage on this living.

Therefore, a complete practical acquaintance with all the facts presented in the Map of Knowledge-360°, from "Man and His Beginnings" through "The Spirit World," would furnish an explanation of consistent aspects of the art and the traditional African artists which today are not thoroughly understood (p. 22).

...Current Issues. Isolating the area of art history in relation to the issue of art, we find that art history provides an effective, diversified and distinguished education to undergraduate and graduate students by engaging them in the study of visual art in its historic context, its source as a profound human knowledge and experience and its contribution through research to the development of art history as a discipline. Traditional art historians studying cognitive processes in the visual art are particularly interested in the characteristics of art in museum collections, the development of Old Masters' art, and in the use of archaeological strategies to study antique art. While reading current issues of art historical journals that have editorial policies which promote discussion of current topics, trends and controversies within the discipline (such as *Ogonyck and Iskusstvo*), this writer cannot help but conclude that there are a significant number of art historians concerned with where we are, how we got here and where we are going from here.

21st Century Art History. The modern art historian loosely considers the question "Where are we going from here?" from a distinctive perspective—a contemporary and futurist one. More specifically, in trying to gain a greater understanding of how art historians may become self-conscious of their discipline, that is, achieve a future perspective, the present writer attempts to point out and discern what he believes to be the beginnings of an important new direction he hereby names "Art History of the 21st Century." The main point of a future art historical knowledge is rather simple in essence yet profound in implications: art history to be practiced by professional academicians will occur within a contemporary art context—art historical knowledge tied to the study of contemporary artists rather than the Old Masters. By attempting to come to grips with contemporary basis of an art historians' theories and activities, a study of practicing contemporary artists may lead to greater self-understanding. In this respect, the future art historical knowledge shares a goal similar to Aldous Huxley's (*Brave New World*) attempt to develop a futuristic view of man.

In Attempting to sketch the beginning of an art history of the 21st century, it is of value to consider the study of visual art within the framework of contemporary artists' activities, their visual sources as a profound human knowledge and experience, and their contributions through problem solving of current issues, to the development of contemporary history of art as a discipline. After setting forth a conceptual scheme, as afforded by a brief consideration of the contemporary artists, the case can be made for an art history of the 21st century. To give some credence to what is being advocated, three areas within the study of contemporary art will be considered for purposes of identifying some of the underlying art historical basis of the future: contemporary artists at work, the visual issues of their art, and the dissemination of the knowledge and experience of their activities through search, research and discovery.

African Artists' Roles. Traditional African art issues, such as those presented in the Map of Knowledge-360°, reveal what disputes the traditional artists have about their society. Also, the contemporary art issues, such as the ones identified in the MK-360°: item 20, are explicit of what the contemporary artists value as major issues of their time. These traditional and contemporary issues of African art would then provide a strong theoretical basis for the study of works of art. Since these issues are internal rather than external evidence of work of art, an art historical methodology finally evolves: that which discourages the investigation of art from external sources only. Rather it stresses the analysis of a work of art, first, to understand the issue and then work outwards with external sources to show the art as a sum total of human knowledge and experience. The identified issues in Oditia's Map of Knowledge-360° are therefore distinctive affirmations of African artists' active roles in the daily problems of their time as well as our living world.(p.32-33).

Lorenzo Pace

Transcript of his recollection as interview, New York, 1994.

I never understood the concept but I knew that it was right and he was inspired to participate in Plexus which relates people with other ethnic background all together. When we went in Sardinia in 1987, we were more than 200 artists and scientists from all over the world and from all arts fields, with different views. It was a great and complex experience. It was my first time that I was in Sardinia and I was fascinated by that its nature, its history and culture. Plexus is a vary experience made in many different spaces and times during the last ten years. Plexus was able to bring so many people with different political vision to reflect together upon the impact of Columbus on the Americans as an issue of reconciliation among all of us as human beings and not only as an issue of conflict. Plexus was able to create multilayer communication links among artists with different backgrounds. "Plexus Black Box" is a philosophical concept in which I feel to be related with the others Plexus artists without to understand fully its real contents, because it is not so important to understand everything but to feel positive about it and to go for it and through it. My experience about Plexus, made in ten years, allows myself to say that I know that everything that does not make sense, beyond the scene, later goes in focus. It is not necessary for an artist to have everything in a logical sequential form, but to feel good about and to have fun. But Plexus, also in formal sense as for example in the event made with Franco Meloni at the University of Cagliari, was able to accomplish also more structured institutional expectations. Plexus art events were able to make sense from no sense.

William Parker

Text In Order to Survive, 1984, a Statement, New York, 1984.

"We cannot separate the starving child from the starving musician, both things are caused by the same thing capitalism, racism and the putting of military spending ahead of human rights. The situation of the artist is a reflection of America's whole attitude toward life and creativity."

There was a period during the 1960's in which John Coltrane, Malcolm X, Duke Ellington, Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, Bill Dixon, Sun Ra, Martin Luther King and Albert Ayler were all alive and active.

Avant garde jazz contemporary improvised music coming out of the Afro-American was at a peak of creativity and motion. ABC Impulse was recording Coltrane and Archie Shepp, ESP Disk was recording the music of Albert Ayler, Sunny Murray, Sonny Simmons, Giuseppi Logan, Noah Howard, Frank Wright, Marion Brown, Henry Grimes, Alan Silva and many other exponents of the music. Blue Note and Prestige Records were recording Andrew Hill, Eric Dolphy, Sam Rivers, Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry among others.

Radio stations such as WLIB now called BLS and WRVR which now plays pop music were both playing jazz 24 hours a day including some of the new music of Coltrane, Shepp, Ayler, and Ornette Coleman.

There was energy in the air as people marched and protested in the north and south demanding human rights, demanding that the senseless killing in Vietnam stop. Simultaneously, like musicians before them the avant garde became aware of the necessity to break away from tradition business practices. Like musicians lives being in the hand of producers and nightclubs owners who only wish to make money and exploit the musician. The musicians began to produce their own concerts and put out their own records in order to gain more control over their lives.

The Jazz Composers' Guild formed by Bill Dixon was one of the first musicians' organization in the 60's to deal with the self determination of the artist. Other efforts had been made by Charles Mingus, Sun Ra as they both had produced their own concerts and records in the 50's. To follow was the A.A.C.M. (Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians) formed about a year after the Jazz Composers' Guild, and Milford Graves, Don Pullen, record company SRP (Self Reliance Program). Musicians got together with poets to put out a magazine called the Crickett, all the articles were written by poets and musicians themselves. It was edited by Imanu Baraka, Larry Neal, A.B. Spellman, advisors on the magazine were Milford Graves, Cecil Taylor and Sun Ra. Contributors included Roger Riggins, Stanley Crouch, Albert Ayler, and Ishmael Reed. The motto was "black Music in Evolution."

Just as the music and the movement began to break ground establishing itself, several things happened: Malcolm X was assassinated, Martin Luther King was assassinated, John Coltrane died, British rock and roll began to change the music industry. Not only could record be sold they could sell posters, books, wigs, dolls, and thousands of electric guitars to the youth of America. They promoted and pushed rock music as the real thing yet when these rock stars were interviewed they would say always site jazz or blues as the origin of rock. Also at this time there was a sudden increase in the availability of drugs in the black community. Every apparent gain as a result of the civil rights movement was not given up without fight. All gains were achieved because America had a gun to its's head. To question, to speak of change was never willingly allowed the 60's movement was so strong that it couldn't be denied. They could silence a few poets but they couldn't silence an entire nation. The 1970's was a period of tranquilization. There was no mass movement to continue the motion set forth by the 60's, it was a ten year period of systematically silencing and discouraging the truth. Poets were made to feel like criminals; people were going back in time because it seemed easier than going forward. Record companies began only to record safe music, musicians began to

water down their music. The C.I.A. and F.B.I. had files on the music they knew who was going along with the program, those who bought cars and played electric music and those whose politics were considered a threat to the existing inertia. The neglect of the poor, the neglect of the arts is no accident, this country is sustained by killing off all that is beautiful, that deals with reality. They will go to any lengths to hold back the truth, to prevent the individual from hearing and seeing his or her own vision of life. Some people are controlled by neglect while other are controlled by making them stars.

As the 80's arrived this fire music that talked about revolution and healing had almost vanished only a few musicians continue to play and develop it. The sleepiness of the 70's gave birth to a new electronic age of computers and video machines. Where ever human energy could be saved it was popular music lost what little identity it had. In listening to today's pop music it's hard to tell whether the group is male or female, black or white, synthesizers have replaced living musicians. We have all been desensitized people walk around in dazes sitting back while these blood thirsty gangsters have free reign of the country and of the people's lives. Our food source, our housing source are owned and operated by power hungry people who do not have our best interest in mind, they only wish to make a profit. All of this is not new knowledge, it has been said many times before, the message must be constantly repeated, intellectual knowledge of the problems is not enough, we must feel the blade piercing the hearts of all that are oppressed, jailed, starved and murdered by these criminals who call themselves leaders who act in the name of peace and democracy. Since we have little we must band together pulling all our little resources to form a base in which to work. We must learn from all the mistakes of the past dropping any selfish notions in order for this movement to succeed, in order for it to take root and begin to grow.

We must ask the questions why am I an artist? Why do I play music? What is the ultimate goal? Am I playing with the same spirit that I played with 10 years ago or have I just become more technically proficient?

The idea is to cultivate an audience by performing as much as possible on a continuous basis, not waiting to be offered work rather creating work. Uniting with all those who hear. Those who are willing to go all the way. We must put pressure on those with power to give some of it up (picketing, boycotts, petitions, what ever it takes) and finally we must define ourselves and not be defined by others. We must take control of our lives, building a solid foundation for the future.

Paper Introduction, published in Bill Collector Newsletter and re-published in Plexus CUANDO Passport, New York, 1992.

It is the role of the artist to dance, sing, shout and whisper about all that is wonderful, beautiful and majestic. To mirror and project the present and future, to tell us the stories inside little children's hearts (giving us a view beyond the horizon). Communicating by the language of stone, wood, wool and language of happiness, sadness and joy. It is the role of the artist to incite political, social and... spiritual revolution. To awaken us from our sleep and never let us forget our obligations as human beings...To light the fire of human compassion. When this inner flame is burning man is uplifted to another state, his vision and sense are doubled he sees, hears and feels things he never did before. The heat of the earth, the cry of living beings. This fire is stoked by conviction, caring... communication with others. The idea is to live strongly within this vision without compromises even after being met by a cold grey world that could care less about vision, a world that makes insensitivity and murder of idealism and individualism a standard. It is the role of the artist to become a human being to see that the only art is the art of living, the artist must quickly make the transformation to human being and in the same breath come to realize he or she is a vehicle through which light passes. We can flow and sing with this reality. Being a great artist is not enough. One must be obsessed with the

vision of life. Art must transform to reality to a healing ritual a ceremony of the inner voice that says the only tradition is the tradition of life and living things, the tradition of the self being created each moment. The masterpiece must constantly be created. Every year more creative beings have gone into the business of entertainment to make a dollar. They make their music weaker for the sake of popularity, why not make it stronger for the sake popularity? America was founded and is run on a palette of untruths and illusions in every area of life (War is though of as real while peace is a dream). Art can clarify life or it can help to reconfirm these lies. It's not...a matter of just staying alive and existing but living as full creative beings, beings who take the step not when it is safe or out of survival but as a process of living. The way trees grow and the way flowers just appear out of nowhere. Most books and gestures about music, dance, painting, film, and the other art forms have rarely been written by the artist themselves...Art as life in America is defined and...controlled by either the capitalist or the scientist, the curiosity seekers who play games with life. To these people art is an ornament they look and promote music and dance that is technically polished, slick and does everything art is supposed to be according the guidelines of the 80's. They never really believe that art can change the heart of man. To the theoretician and the intellectual art is never expected to be reality, this is what makes art, art. They will not accept the idea that life is more important than art and that for any creative work to be valid on the same level as life that work must sing and swing from an unearthly reality. All the controlling factors of the world of the arts are a mirror of the controlling powers of the world (AMERICA). The European Western capitalist. The Afro-American creative music since its reception in the United States, has been uprooted from ritual and healing to the status of entertainment. Watered down, raped and pillaged by the money vendors and the so called jazz lovers to meet their own needs. The black musician provides the creativity, the capitalist producer control it, creating an industry off of not the meat of the music but off of the embellishment presenting the music on lesser terms making it more palatable. The real music as any real art causes change, it asks man to question and not to live with lies and injustices. We have entered the 80's with our eyes still red from the sleepiness of the 70's. America is a deep sleep, the revolution of today consists of machines replacing people and people acting like machines, dancing robots and digital watches. This is the age of electronics and instant death. Acoustic human energy is frowned upon, everyone is trying to take the easy way out. No longer can the creative musician sit back and let others define him, he is labelled and catalogued, interviewed, produced, recorded, bought and sold by people with tin ears and souls. If the musician believes in life then he must define himself and not be manipulated. The Bill Collector is a newsletter written by the artist who wishes to define and share his existence with others, in what is once again a move toward self-determination.

Frank Pio

Transcript of his recollection as interview, New York, 1994.

I co-curated the last Plexus Black Box show at Rosenberg Gallery and my role was to organize the spiritual ritual elements of the show. My participation was also to re-activate the spiritual components of the Plexus Black Box which were lacking in strength and my pieces on the Madonna and Angels was about it. I like to recall the opening ritual of the show in which the most important part was the ritual aspect of it. Most people did not understand initially so many texts. The ritual to take everybody outside. Plexus Black Box was about all this information and about Sandro's dissertation. Plexus as community-based art organization was dealing with "Plexus Black Box" on the issue of the reconciliation through art in the community. Plexus Well Being and Reconciliation is some how for my interpretation a way to

communicate, to create a dialogue how we can interact together around the world. My vision was related to universal aspects of the planet as it was stated by Marshall McLuhan. The "Plexus Black Box" was brought back to the community to avoid to continue to be contaminated by the academic institution because there were no interests of dialogue with the Lower East Side Community. The students of current issues in art education were invited to participate in the show and to discuss what they experienced there. It became an issue of current issue of art education because of its institutional standard setting. The cards of curriculum game were placed in the show as introduction to an art community-based art education program.

Rolando Politi

Text *Plexus Art Cartel*, New York, 1987.

Sandro, organize Plexus like a Club Card Carring. The Board is international, legalize it in Switzerland, Panama or Bahamas. Information is electronic (Hard copy optional) through an Art/Science Network Your Board invests into the frame, the cards, etc. Plexus Board is not-for profit, because you are fostering a science and culture co-operation network. In other words what it costs you to set the system is what you should ask for from a variety of "fund benefactors." The Plexus Card Members must pay a fee - to gain access to the network. The artist in the First Person must make an investment just like investments are made in paper and pencils, but you must give them something better than Xerox copies and loose sheets. You will be successful in selling many plastic Plexus Cards, once you organize the information subjects for quick access. Now here is the Big Point. You as the Plexus Board must establish an international legal and copyright monitoring unit. The information should be accepted in the bank unless it is screened (copyright) and verified to be the true and original source of that specific artist/scientist in the first person. You will get the trust of the card members by establishing such a unit. Also if any work is sold as a result of the network, Plexus is entitled to a % of the profit (agreement to be signed before one becomes a card member). Also events staged as a result of Plexus Networking must have the Plexus name clearly in evidence. You don't want a fee for events because you are needed to generate sales and they may show profits or losses. But you are entitled to fee for sales of work by the artist in the first person. Your Network will put in direct contact sellers and buyers.

Text *Plexus International as a Sweat Equity Cartel*, New York, 1992.

Plexus International as a "Sweat Equity Cartel of Art" is a beautiful creative tool for a partnership of "the artists in the first person" to exchange his own work without filters or barriers. The "Open Market" eventually will recognize the Cartel, particularly when the issue is the international debt of the Third World vs. the First World, and the role of the artists in the first person for a world route correction in the use of human resources. The currency unit of exchange in the cartel is the "Plexonian" which is equivalent to one ECU (European Currency Unit), one dollar is about one and half ECU. The Plexonian was designed by Micaela Serino in Rome in 1991 as her contribution to the development of the "Plexus Black Bag" project. The Plexonian money will be printed in a limited edition to support the Cartel and the voyage of the Elisabeth from Sardinia to Gorée, Dakar. The Plexonians will be certified by Plexus International Storage and delivered to Plexus Dakar in order to be presented to the Minister of Culture of Senegal for the approval of the Government in support of the Plexus project of the opening of Plexus World Art Bank in Gorée, Dakar. To get some amount of Plexonians it is necessary to donate to the Plexus Cartel of "Sweat Equity" an equivalent amount of value in labour or art works, in reference to building the Art Bank. Example: Sandro, Plexus 23s, buys a "Robotcap 3," an original certified Plexus art work by Rolando, Plexus 43, for 1000 Plexonians.

"Robotcap 3" will receive the certificate of original Plexus work by Plexus International Storage after the Storage has received from Plexus 43 all documentation of that specific art work and verified with the monitoring unit that the member has full credit for what presented as true source of it. Plexus 23s has available an amount of Plexonians against a quantity of labour made by him in support of the Cartel's activities. Plexus 23s pays in cash 1000 Plexonians to Plexus 43. Rolando will have credit inside the network of the Cartel to buy for an amount of 1000 Plexonians a quantity of products or labours listed in the "Plexus Black Bag," the shopping tool for the members of the cartel and diffused through internet within the "Plexus Black Box". Plexus members will receive a plastic card membership with a personal ID. number, which will allow to have access to the Cartel's activities and to receive the last news with a list of the new works offered and of what was sold, with relative bids (quotations) in Plexonian currency.
How to become a member of the Plexus cartel?

Text *Plexus International Network*, New York, 1992.

Plexus International Network is the tool we use to create "value" and is available only to Plexus members. Einstein theorised: "Energy is neither created nor destroyed, it is only transferred" and you as the artist in the first person must initially invest "creative time" measured with "sweat equity" into the network and reinvest the "values" (Plexonian money) received for the initial work back into the network. You and each and every member keeps on reinvesting into the Web until such time as your work is demanded by the outside market and you decide to exchange (sell) it for hard currency (real money). At this point in time your work leaves the network and you give to Plexus a % of the hard currency. (Sometimes, there could be as many as three layers of commissions of % to be involved in this selling process). These commissions from the different entities involved will be in exchange for the value created by the network in launching your work. Plexus Art Bank, in Gorée, Dakar, will issue the Plexonian money in exchange of a 1% or 2% commission of its face value. One Plexonian will be equivalent to a hard currency. Plexus Black Bag, in Rome, is the marketing arm of the network and will receive a commission to be determined individually and when "works" are sold for hard currency through this arm. Plexus International Passport, in New York, is the newsletter of the network. In each issue, the newsletter will list works offered and sold including the list of their latest Plexonian value. This system will work like the "Bid/Ask System" used in all the counter financial markets. It is important to remember that between members you can only trade in Plexonians, no hard currency. Continuous trade between members is therefore always encouraged. Obviously any work will have ultimately a realistic chance to be sold in the outside market if it achieves a magical balance between inside and outside market dynamics. It is important to remember also that you as "the artist in the first person" do really and truly control the entire toy mechanism. Trades and contributions of sweat equity and creative time will also be printed in this newsletter.

Plexus International Storage, in Cagliari, Sardinia, will certify and document your work as true and original. It will act as a screening agent. Documents and works can periodically be used to organize shows and travelling exhibitions. In essence the Storage will act as a promotional tool to generate interest and value. These four bodies are the major pillars upon which this international network can be built. You can leave the network at any time. Just do not renew your membership and removed your work from the Storage and therefore from "Plexus Black Bag". You cannot however have back the value of your sweat equity contribution out of the network in Plexonian or in hard currency. You will leave it as your contribution to

the network while you were member enjoying all benefits that such a membership brought to you.

Andrea Portas

Written recollection, Cagliari, 1994.

Plexus: Some Remarks. Gaetano Brundu was the first in February 1987 to talk to me about Plexus; he was organizing with some artists an art show inside a house in the district of Castello in Cagliari. The theme was Bring your Serpent and also I was invited to carry my serpent. I started in this way to be concerned with the logic of Plexus and of its revolutionary theories on the world of contemporary art. Some months after Plexus organized (Gavoi, Nuoro, July 1987) a big international happening in Sardinia, this was a good opportunity to undertake a series of contacts with the artworld and to change air from the routine of the artistic scenery of the island. The event got a good success of critic and interest and it was thought that it could become the beginning of a permanent and lasting relationship among the artists in the first person of a group which might grow gradually in progress with the time, a kind of movement of ideas. During these years the dates of Plexus were several, we went through Carloforte, Cagliari, Dakar, Roma, New York, and again Cagliari; various the covered routes by the ship of the slaves of art, also in ideas and in artistic ways.

Plexus: Motivations. I worked in these years to bring forward the idea of an art free from ties with the market, that it is concerned mainly to re-sew the tugs with the social tissue with which I shared Plexus goals, if often also I disagreed on some attitudes. It is necessary to understand that inside a group not all positions are accepted by all individuals, to which is left the faculty to refrain from operating in particular circumstances but in which anyway it must prevail the aggregate will, more than the breaking up, and the pushes of the sharing of ideas and routes must be firm and firmly repeatable.

Plexus: The Problem of Confusion. The lack of landmarks and roles, the arrogance of some kind attitudes that made the slowdown of the number of the engine turns of Plexus, creating confusion and a kind of vain and presumptuous improvisation incapable to get concrete itself in something more mature. I do not want to say that all should be through away, on the contrary I say that it is arrived the moment to save what good has been done and way not to give value to it; it is arrived the moment to rebuild the operative nucleus which really acts in the interest of all, that takes the change of the organization and of the care of the movement's activities, keeping in contact the artists and informing them of the choices and of the ongoing operative proposals.

Plexus: Out of the Gallery. I have already mentioned to the relationship of open conflict that Plexus has brought forward against the selling system of the artworks (Art System). Plexus has often denied the dialogue with the artmarket in the attempt to find different strategies from those of the multinational art societies that mainly operate their choices on the basis of financial needs, secure like they are that the economic factor and of profit is of main importance in the world of visual arts too. To break these schemes the contemporary artist feels the need to look for an alternative audience different from that which usually attends the centers of power and of art consumption like public and private galleries, even if this may imply and implies the growing of economic problems and of maintenance for the artist himself. This way of acting which from some years is followed by different international artists, it is known as "Out of the Gallery" movement and it consists in the coherent choice to show the work of art in places not exactly in accordance with their fruition. Out of the Gallery, far away from the centers of power, art may return to speak of

themes of social interest and of popular involvement, it can start to breathe pure air, to live of its own light.

Plexus: Strategies for an Upcoming Future. The retrieval of these issues, without that these are resolved through cunning operations of apparent breakdown, the reopening of the borders of the group, the loyalty of purposes and the unity in the choices, are very important for the future of Plexus. Many times the decisions are made by few and this had made the detachment of many artists, who felt excluded and kept out. It will be important afterwards to re-sew the tugs made by too many interferences and intrusions by few who created confusion and little professionally, and above all the coherence of choices and purposes; it is necessary to arrive to the point in which the organization and the improvisation touch each other and they complete themselves in each other.

Plexus: Time+Art. One apple is less than two, but one is better than nothing. Why through it away? In November 1992 a strange parcel of yellow ochre colour was delivered to me, the sender was an artist of New York Rolando Politi. I met Rolando here in Cagliari in October during the conference "The Well Being in the XXI Century." The parcel contained a letter in which Rolando proposed to me an open collaboration, regarding some points of current interest in the New York area: Homeless Society, Recycling Art, Culture Jamming, Sex Line, etc; and various information about the life in the metropolis. For it he sent me a series of significant fliers and posters pulled out from NYC walls, inviting me to join the operation "Dont Dump Drains to River," it was required the creation of a stamp with this call to not pollute and the image of a fish splashing in a river. Everything had to be printed next to the sewers on the streets of his city. It was a clear operation of Sidewalk-Art and I was already engaged with similar things, therefore I accepted well this invitation to a collaboration so interesting and precise. In the same period Gaetano Brundu who undertook the weight of Plexus International Storage asked me if I could think to do an installation for the month of December 1992 or January 1993. I accepted also this invitation with enthusiasm and I got the idea that the two demands were somehow in relation each other. I started to work to the two projects, gathering a good number of information and I arrived to the conclusion that there were the conditions to create a network of information for all artists in the first person, a small network, an art subnetwork of Plexus, "Time+Art," ... time of art, time for art, time to art, time+art. It was in act the first project of collaboration between artists of Cagliari and New York, the first Art+Walk of Time+Art; the big mother was Plexus and it was December 3, 1992. Plexus: Why Time+Art. I already told which are the real problems of Plexus today: the poor collaboration among components; the absolute incapacity to manage consistently the organization of events; the lack of programming also among individuals; the sufficiency of relations and contacts, etc. It is necessary a check up, we need to reorder ideas; to make a control: is perhaps sick Plexus? Does it not feel well? What is happening? But just now? No! Plexus is not ill or anyway it is not a serious patient, it needs only a mouthful of air. It is possible to say that there was originated a kind of elite which is obstructing a firm program or strategy, and it is joined in certain cases with very powerful institutional centers, arriving to pollute the coherence and adhesion of some projects with the social tissue, legitimating justifications, after not related determinate choices, clearly without consistence. Therefore it was proposed by few but firm artists to pursue with strength the logic of the group, in place and in time, to collaborate actively, to propose ideas and projects, to articulate it in different lines of research, production centers, to promote artistic events, to work to involve other figures etc., to show to exist as group. Plexus: Time+Art...What is...Time+Art born as a network of art, finalized more than to the simple production of works of Mail-Art, of which anyway already has a large collection in its center of Cagliari and New York, to support a link among artists of different countries, with the purpose to

create collaborations with exhibition or research goals. Today Time+Art is established as a not profit cultural organization - Visual Arts Project - and it has expanded the range of its competencies. It was able to define better its contacts with foreign countries and has available a large exposition space to organize alternative shows or debates and conferences on art. Time+Art has the purpose to become a point of reference for the development of visual arts in Sardinia, through the organization and management of shows for students of art schools, of young artists, group shows, happenings, performances, and other art events in Sardinia and abroad.

Jose Rodriguez

Transcript of his presentation at round table *Cultural Navigation and the Community: The Lower East Side*, NYU Summer Institute of Living Traditions in Art, 1993.

DeLeon: Jose, have you ever tried to bridge, you've been involved in artistic frame work in the Lower East Side some time now. Have you ever tried to make a bridge that gentleman was talking about?

Rodriguez: Sometimes I call it 'discovery of fear'. You're right to fear the others, the others different from you. So many times it's surprising when you see an old Jewish lady and you wish to help her to cross the street but it is not possible because the idea that she has, called fear, "Oh, no these people are rub you". The same level we have too from Latino to Black people, to understand that because we use the word white, "They're white" by saying that, we're separating them out. Sure people have strange idea, but it's what we called here the fear we always spoke about it. The fear is constancy. What we try to do in CUANDO and with PLEXUS is to fight racism and we are very active. People don't like to talk about it, people don't like to mention, but it's reality. And reality is that in this city we're fighting constantly against fear, we're trying in our community to establish a way in which all these diversities can find a way to talk, to communicate to be together. We are against that fear. I work in Brooklyn. I'm working in a child and family administration. I have to win that. We're fighting that fear which is our main problem. We're with fear in our community, we try to fight, sometimes we're able to accomplish something sometimes we can't, but that's a part of what it's all about.

DeLeon: Tell us about PLEXUS.

Rodriguez: PLEXUS started ten years ago, from a cosmopolitan confront by seeing this diversity of cultures. PLEXUS has a goal something called "cultural navigation" and what is trying to do in all these ten years is to make a bridge between those different cultures and also make to see the artist as a person of the community and not to see the artist production within his cultural context. The Artists in the first person are the main concern. Plexus also try to points out that the living tradition is what defines community. Art defines the community and the artist defines his community and the community defines art and this has been Plexus's reason to build in Lower East Side the collaboration with CUANDO. The collaboration started in 1985 and it began to develop an international house of cultures of CUANDO where different cultures come together and try to understand each other. An other level is what has been call experimental and avant-garde. The Avant-Garde understanding was that the artist is a social class in the community. What defines community and what defines the artists is the work within their community. We don't want to be an institution like Metropolitan Museum, MOMA, I call that Art: Pension Art. We can see it. We are talking about art in the living scene, the permanent scene. That is a concept that is reality, PLEXUS art is living scene, a community living scene; a community culture is a community living scene, what you get in museum and galleries is dead body.

DeLeon: Well preserved.

Rodriguez: Yes, well preserved. I'm talking about that neither CUANDO neither PLEXUS neither Miguel we don't need a resting place for dead body. We're interesting in living art and living art is living community. That's what happens, you're in this summer institute, you're coming to our community to see what we do. Don't come to see dead body. Come to see and research us as living body, people, art, painting, singing, feeling, experimenting, that's an invitation that we're making to you. Come and see us, as a living Art. If you go to see Metropolitan, Lincoln Center, you pay your money there. That's dead. If you want to see alive, come to us.

Paper *The Voyage of the Elisabeth: Cultural Navigation and Community*, presented at roundtable, NYU Summer Institute of Living Traditions, New York, 1993.

Cultural Navigation: Plexus International was created or funded by a group of individuals, all of them coming from an cosmopolitan cultural experience living at that moment in the City of New York and were been confronted with the reality of dealing or relating to a multiplicity of cultures or realities, which simultaneously were assessing the world in terms of what that world and their culture meant to the other worlds and their cultural realities. Been confronted with these other cultures assess their European culture with a sort of accusatory discourse they set up to develop a bridge among cultures. This "bridge" couldn't be base on the perception of a dominant culture, this bridge has to evolve from a perspective of "fraternal" encounter and gear toward a creative synthesis. This creative synthesis is to be a base on the following premises: the Artist in the First person and the possibility of developing a cultural synthesis. The Artist in the FIRST PERSON is a concept evolving from the following facts: that the perception of an autonomous art is a fallacy of the rationality of the Modern era. This "autonomous art" instead of negating the condition of artistic creativity as another commodity in reality is confirming this condition of commodity. As such the artistic production is another artefact named by the dominant structures of power and as such the artistic creation becomes an object of possession of the dominant power. As the dominant structures have this power also they determine and define what is to be considered "art." By such action the dominant structures eliminated two fundamentals elements of the artistic creativity - the artistic production as a reflection of the social praxis and as a "cultural production." By this power the dominant structures are able to define in terms of "high" and "low" culture, civilize and "savage" culture. And most important this definition is done by limiting who would enjoy and enhance their subjectivity by an act of apropiationing of the cultural production of the society. They define society in terms of their dominant privileges and define the self-esteem of the component of Society. The artist in the first person is the possibility of regaining the power of defining the artistic creation by the Artist and as such by eliminating the condition of commodity to their creation. And most important the Artist in the First Person is defining his creation as a cultural production. This ethical action is only possible through a social praxis within the community. This social praxis of the artist allows the community to start defining. The community won't be defined by an image and delimited by the dominant structures. This possibility of the community to define itself allows the community to redefine their self-esteem and to determine their own cultural production. Also, this autodefinition will allow the community to regain the possibility of knowledge. Not a knowledge base in the domination of nature and as such a relation base in the domination of one subject to another, but a knowledge base in enhancing the creative subject. Been the subject a creative entity allows the community to develop a communicative consciousness and overcome their role of slaves of the dominant structures. By overcoming this relation of master-slave the Artist in the First Person and the community are able to start to participate in their own definition. This participation allows the community to develop its own language, its own forms of expression, its own forms of playful

experience - its own theater! Not a theater of repetition but one of creation. The community cultural production won't become artifacts of museums, galleries - artefacts of the Pantheon! To be observed and researched, but will become expression of life. The community won't be anymore a death body but an intense experience that would be defined as life. Plexus understands cultural navigation as the only alternative which will allow the cultural production to be an energetic and living creation. As such 'culture' won't be the patrimony of the Pantheon. The only possible way of defining culture is as a living organism. In this sense, the community and the Artist in the First Person perceive culture and its by-products as creation of the present. The community will be able to define its culture as the process of the becoming, never as Artefacts of the Pantheon but as present that may become the future but never the past. The Artist in the First Person and its praxis within the community insurance's the possibility of naming and defining the cultural production. The possibility of reconciliation among individuals and cultures is only possible through a reality base on multiplicity and diversity. The only way in which this diversity may reconcile is within the bridge of the cultural navigation. Multiplicity-diversity: pluralism is the only possibility of freedom! Freedom that defines the subject as the Permanent becoming as the possibility of a synthesis of the diversity. This cultural synthesis is the concretization of the well being for our present and for the possibility of the next Century. The Well Being is possible as far as the artists and their communities are able to develop and create a new cultural synthesis. Cultural Synthesis becomes the main enemy / obstacle of the uniqueness-homogeneity of the dominant structures of power - the structures of rationality! Rationality understood as the language of domination. The language which perceives all relations as a Struggle, a discourse that perceives the subject as an object of domination. A domination that has to be understood as the domination by an elitist-self-define superior class that elaborates a discourse of fear - the discourse of ethnical and cultural cleansigness; the discourse that defines all relations as relationships of domination, that defines the subject as an object of possess as another commodity. In its 10 years of existence Plexus has understood his action praxis as a social praxis exercised in the community. As such the living culture is an experience within the confinements of the community - the only place where the artist can become the Artist in the First Person - is in the community were the permanent present - the permanent becoming- happens. This intensive experience of Plexus has been exercised in two levels: One of those has been the praxis of art in the best tradition of the Avant-garde creativity. Avant-garde understood as the artist regaining his social praxis and regaining his First Person - the artist been able to define its creativity, been able to name his art. This Avant-garde praxis is a continuation of a tradition which took the responsibility of confronting art as another rational institution of the dominant power structures. Plexus International has understood their Avant-garde praxis as a praxis of the form of the autonomous-logocentric art. But as a praxis that liberates art from its role as an institution as another commodity. The Avant-garde praxis of Plexus has to be accepted as the negation of art as an institution, as the elaboration of the artist context within the community context. Because of this Avant-garde tradition, the other element of Plexus intensive experience is in the maintenance of the 'living tradition in art.' This living tradition in art is the one that defines the community as the space of the living culture. Culture becoming the beholder of magic, the beholder of shadows, in the state of permanent becoming. The living tradition in art is in ultimate sense what defines a community, it is by keeping the oral tradition, the passing from generation to generation the essence of the community, the essence of culture - culture as a living experience. The living tradition in art is also the act of self-definition of the self-image of a culture of a community. In terms of the dominant rationality, the maintenance of a living tradition in art prevents the rational conscious industry from

defining the community. Prevent the rational dominant structures of power from developing the discourse of the 'low culture,' of defining culture as a 'death body' as an object of the Pantheon. It also reminds the Avant-garde tradition that is within then the possibility of defining its own creativity, of challenging art as an institution. The other expression of Plexus praxis is their conception of the International Community House of Cultures, this been the more permanent project of Plexus. Plexus has projected itself from its insertion as a network of cultural enclaves. In this sense, the Storage in Cagliari, Sardinia, is one of the 'stone' of the Plexus network; the House of the Slave Art in Goree, Senegal, becomes the other. Then Plexus Amsterdam and Plexus Rome in the European "plateau," and finally the network is amplified with the International Community House of All Cultures in new York, a project that Plexus has been working in association with CUANDO Civic and Cultural Center since 1985. The Plexus network becomes the structure that insurance possibility of the Well Being. The Well Being becomes the finality or by-product of the concept of Reconciliation. Plexus understands that the goal of Reconciliation of the cultures is concretized within the living experience of a new cultural synthesis. To understand the experience of Reconciliation is to understand that the only way that Reconciliation becomes a concrete reality is through the historical experiment of a new cultural synthesis. The new cultural synthesis becomes the living culture as a permanent present as the eternal becoming of a cultural production: the synthesis of cultures: European, African, American, Indian, etc., into a synthesis or pluralism of cultures, by which the individual becomes the living subjects, the permanent becoming in freedom.

Transcript of his recollection as interview, New York, 1994.

From the Portorican cultural tradition from which I come from, I was educated that the artists are the first voices speaking on behalf of the community, and that the artists are not separated from the community in which they belong. The artists are significant components of their society. The different communities and artists, involved in the history of Plexus, were both interactive significant components of the Plexus development. In a historical grounding of Plexus, there are certain elements which have to be established to understand how Plexus Black Box became a metaphor of the cultural growing of Plexus as a community-based art organization. In the Plexus historical growing it is possible to identify different phases of development.

The first phase started in the end of 1981, in New York, when Sandro Dernini, Giancarlo Schiaffini and other Italian artists, thought to create a loose organization with the idea to open a space in which the artists "in the first person" could be the coproducers of their own art activities. This original idea took shape in 1982, in a performance space in the Chelsea area of New York, named Plexus, dedicated to the interaction of the different art forms of expression, without any necessary involvement of the community, on the traditional model art for the sake of art. The second phase began in 1984 when Plexus, lost his performance space, and moved in the Lower East Side of New York, at the Shuttle Theater. In the Lower East Side it was a radical cultural and social tradition through which Plexus began its second phase.

This second stage could be named the Plexus art-opera phase as a collective art form of expression to perform collectively their egocentric ideas. It was still part of the autonomous concept of art but started to get involved with people from the community like Sarah Farley, a local leader of an homesteaders community, Miguel Pinero and Miguel Algarin, originators of the Nuyoricans Poets Cafè and Williams Parker, leader of Sound Unity a large community jazz collective. They were groups with a different history and expressing the alienation of their community in their own languages and defending their presence in the struggle of the Lower East Side under a heavy cultural and real estate gentrification pressure. This encounter started

to change the entire personality of Plexus by understanding that art was not only about their individual art expression but to integrate their art forms into the community life in which they were placed.

This move Plexus to grow in a third phase which it was called "co-operas" in which, in 1987-1988, the artists started to think also in collective art forms. Plexus was forced to start to develop what the historical art avant-garde left to be developed in the direction of the relation between power and community. This development brings to this last recent phase of Plexus, started in 1989 to the present, which it is called the reconciliation stage, in which Plexus got involved in politics with academic institutions. In this context, the concept of Plexus Black Box grew as an educational community-based art project, in a broader cultural sense, creating channels of communication among different communities involved in Plexus activities to express their art experiences in connecting themselves with other cultural diversities and to educate the young generations in this multicultural diversity to understand what is art within and out their own culture, and to accept that the world, the society and any community is made by a diversity of many kind groups or cultural experiences. It will help to define themselves. The role of Plexus Black Box is to expose, to integrate all aspects of the society, art is one of these as well as science and technology. The concept of Plexus Black Box is a growing concept of a scientific system build in an institutional academic setting which is integrating artistic and cultural experiences in the community met during its growing. The knowledge of one is integrated into the knowledge of other one. Plexus Black Box has its roots in the historical art avant-gardes, in the surrealist ideas of Antonin Artaud, and in the concept of a responsibility of the artists as intellectuals in the transformation of the society by Antonio Gramsci.

Barnaby Ruhe

Paper *PLEXUS*, published in *Plexus CUANDO Passport*, New York, 1992.

PLEXUS is the shaman journey along the lines of Van Gennep's Rites of Passage's format. That is, the Plexus art opera is an evolving art action that engages in three distinct phases: the first phases the identification and dialogue with the Norm or status quo, embracing the system of art logic even as the embrace is deadly. The second phase is the "dematerialization" of our constellation of concepts surrounding art activity; this phase is what Victor Turner calls the 'liminal' phase where roles reverse, definitions are tossed back into the air, confusion reigns around blazing ambiguities functioning like a Roschartz blot, and artists dive in with no clear functions delineated. At first the second phase seems like just so much nonsense, like acts of desperation. The third phase is the rematerialization around the PLEXUS metaphor. Like a pearl formed around an irritating grain of sand, PLEXUS sets up a metaphor that engages art activity without precise directives. You have to be there: Artists congregate because of a sensed 'communitas' and mill about when the directives are clearly unclear. At some undetermined moment, the mob coheres into congruity. Art shapes itself around a symbol. Plexus takes a shape that is of the moment, yet reflective of the undercurrents of the 'zeitgeist' of the age. This is possible because the second phase functions as an ink blot, allowing within the ambiguity the surfacing of associations from the (collective/community) unconscious. The shamanic journey invariably engages a 'trance' phase that integrates 'reality' with the experiences surfacing at the second phase. Groups engaging a common mind or mood have been documented. Finding that common esprit is not the reaction to orders from a leader, but discovered from within. Hence the urgency of the metaphor as the activating ingredient in the Plexus art opera. Its very ambiguity serves to entrance the participants during the second phase of the ritual journey. The metaphor is by necessity ambiguous, that is capable of multiple

meanings. The dramatic metaphor collects the collective sentiment of the group whose minds are open ended.

Anna Saba

Written recollection, Cagliari, 1994.

I am a sculptress who mainly works Sardinian stones - trachytes - and marbles. In the Plexus movement I used many kinds of materials. Plexus helped me to look at different species of artistic activities. The use of the metaphor was the best tool to overcome the limits due to different languages. And this refers not only to the etymological sense of the word. I gave my contribution to the visibility of Plexus with many works dedicated to the documentation of the various phases of the trail of the multimedia movement. Presently, the seven (and here too the metaphor is present) sculptures - books draw a part of the common history.)

Micaela Serino

Written recollection, Rome, 1994.

Why PLEXUS? For a utopia, for an ideal. I remember with so much enthusiasm I left in 1987 for Gavoi. Finally I was hearing speaking of social problems, injustices, difficulties....within an environment not specifically political! Artist in the first person against the slavery of art (of political parties or of lobbies), for freedom of expression and for safeguarding and recovering cultures and arts on the way of extinction. A metaphoric art journey toward freedom/liberation that brought us to the creation of an International Art Fund in the Maison des Esclaves in Goree/Dakar. A place, dramatically signed by blood, would be instead reanimated by a different thought of a creative movement. Naturally, within a world where the lords of economy are the same of the lords of war (at that time we did not hear yet words such as neo-liberalism, globalization, etc.), our idea was inevitably slowed down by the lack of money....Because the artist in the first person has with difficulty access to the "sacred" places of the art economy. Not feeling myself among them who have opposed excellent elaborations of thought to theoretical-practical difficulties, I decided to oppose my simple being of artist in the first person by "minting", just to say, with a little pinch of provocation, the money of Plexus. With this act, I wanted to bring back the level of communication between the North and the South of the world on the same plane. The direct exchange (opera = money = opera) without any superiority or inferiority. I started with the Italian liras, taking as a cue the dollar by Anita Steckel that expressed (with the images of a penis) how much the high power was of an exclusive male control. But I wanted go further behind my/our beliefs and feminist protests, so that all could take a global dimension, as then it showed itself.

Frank Shifreen

Paper *Modern Art & Commodity Exchange*, published in *Plexus Newsletter* by Plexus International Art Urban Forum, New York, 1988.

Art's separation from the process of material production has enabled it to demystify the reality reproduced in this process. Art challenges the monopoly of the established reality to determine what is "real," and it does so by creating a fictitious world which is nevertheless more real than reality itself. (Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*.) Art has a dual nature in our society. It is both an exchange of ideas, of revelations about which lives within the confines of our economic system the way any other manufactured product does. Many will agree that the current state of American art criticism is poor. There is a hidden agenda in that key secret relationships exist between critics, commercial galleries, and museums. Some critics not only get paid by the magazines they work for and the dealers whose shows they

review, but also get commissions from works they sell privately. Even without this blatant monetary compensation, the system as it stands is incestuous, encouraging favouritism and toadyism, making it extremely hard for the majority of artists to emerge through the traditional magazine/gallery/museum critical network. We all know many good artists who do not show or sell, and I will stress that there are many honest critics who are also prisoners of the system, receiving only a pittance for their efforts. Given this situation, we have begun to focus on each other and the alternative art society that we have created. We include such organizations as: Colab, Group Material, Plexus, or O.I.A., and alternative spaces such as ABC No Rio, Fashion Moda, Alternative Museum, and the Knitting Factory. Many of the younger East Side galleries have also been created to fulfil the need for artists to show their work and for the public to see it. It has become necessary for us to bypass the system which seems to have a severe case of hardening of the arteries. We should celebrate the enormously vital younger artist and enter into dialogue with all. In the postmodernist theory known as critical regionalism, theorists respond to the need for the development of local autonomy. This encourages the growth of many styles and schools, it abolishes cultural imperialism, and it allows for local answers to local problems. Within the Theory of Evolution it is said that development and progress result from mutation in protected, isolated pockets. These mutations eventually find their niches in spite of the pressures of competition and natural selection. This is my metaphor for disenfranchised artists. "Natural selection" is the free economy. After they are nurtured, these radical developments can emerge fully formed, ready to compete with the quotidian. The difficulties of being an artist in our society are incredible. There is a great need for support networks between artists. There is also a need for criticism not tied to the old system. We hope to ease the burden of the perennial artist's dilemma. This magazine is for artists and by artists, and we will serve our community by the freest exchange of ideas and information.

Paper *Open Call*, published in *Plexus Newsletter* by Plexus International Art Urban Forum, New York, 1988.

We resent the use of slave images in any literature, promotional material or propaganda when the use of such images results in the trivialization or simplification of the real African slave experience. More often than not, the Plexus literature, posters, flyers and invitation (a considerable amount) use images of slaves in bondage or in transit as cargo. It is offensive to trivialize history for the sake of artistic argument. Slavery and images of slavery are not merely metaphors. Slavery is the real experience of many hundreds of thousands of people. One cannot use a historical or current event as a vehicle for information without considering certain larger implications and slavery is central to both the American and African experiences. Certainly, there are similarities between the art market and the slave market, that in a disturbing way art has been reduced to a commodity like slaves: something to be bought and sold. However, there is a difference between comparison and equation. If Plexus as a movement stands for freedom of art, freedom of interdisciplinary communication, and freedom of the artists in the first person, then these political tenets must be conveyed without demonstrating the all too common patronising air of most radical/liberal movements. Evoking images of slaves without, or at least acknowledging, the impact is objectionable. Before certain metaphors are used in any Plexus propaganda such use should be examined and the producer of such propaganda should first consider the potential social ramifications the use of that image may have.

Frank Shifreen, Lorenzo Pace, Larry Stanley, Hope Carr, Joi Huckaby.

Youssouph Traore

Text *Plexus International*, Dakar, 1987, translated from French by the researcher.

Gentlemen of the Community, of the Government and of the diplomatic representatives. Dear guests, dear artists, ladies and gentlemen, we thank you to have answer to our call so numerous. We thank you to have left your family duties for this occasion which is built on your ancestral critic and generous availability toward all cultural horizons, formal and non formal. I would like to present an artistic and scientific project, concerning practical aspects and metaphors; it is the complex aspects of Plexus, conceptual denomination of this project. Therefore, we will give you briefly his profile. In fact, Plexus is a project of an international structure of communication for artists and scientists interested in the interaction of art and science within the everyday life. Born in 1982 in New York, Plexus has evolved considerably in the realm of the experimental and interdisciplinary research. Since 1985, it never stopped to stimulate the mutual process of artistic and scientific cooperation. Cooperation realized by the critic dialogue without barriers with the use of the technology. Next to these practical aspects, Plexus has other dimensions more or less complex, place for reflection, and for information. It is the place of the metaphor of the Serpent, understood as a multilateral mean of accelerated communication. This is the brief presentation of Plexus International. Dear audience, thank you to have kindly followed me. I did not ignore that the kindness is in the absolute tradition of Senegal.

APPENDIX B

PLEXUS DOCUMENTS

Document 1

Plexus

Plexus: a structure in the form of a network; any interlacing of parts.

Inter: between or among.

National: big or important enough to have significance for a whole nation.

Urban: characteristic of the city or city life.

Forum: any medium for open discussion.

Plexus is about the city, any city, every city. It is about the wonder of a skyline that won't stop climbing and a blanket of pollution that can't stop spreading. It's about an atmosphere that swells culture and swallows real estate. It's about a dream that is as illogical as soft watches and as seductive as the promise of immortality.

Plexus is dedicated to the proposition that all cities are not created equal, only the people who inhabit them. It is further committed to the proposition that the people of cities are creative survivalists who refuse and acknowledge the laws of nature and who glory in adversity. There is, in the collective heart of the people of the cities, a wild, unremitting thirst for the impossible contradictions that make them simultaneous victims and victors.

Plexus believes that the creative involvement of the individual can do more to enhance a responsive environment than all the bureaucratic machinations of infinity of public agencies. To this end, Plexus is designed to foster an international network of urban dreamers and realists, theoreticians and pragmatists. Plexus means to proceed from observation through discussion and reflection to demonstration and celebration. Its goals are the achievement of a heightened understanding of the possibilities of the city and the definition of alternatives which will accelerate the realization of those possibilities. Plexus will initiate exhibition, lectures and seminars on urban issues as well as sponsor media and performance events. It will also promote the exchange and dissemination of information on innovative ideas, projects and products which can enrich and ennoble the urban experience.

Plexus is situated in a 7,000 square foot loft space in the Chelsea section of Manhattan. It will be designed as a performance space to offer maximum flexibility for cultural and educational events. While Plexus-sponsored activities will initially utilize the Chelsea space, it is hoped that they will spread throughout the urban complex in a manner as unruly and spontaneous as the city itself.

Made by Richard Flood, New York, June 13, 1982.

Document 2

Plexus

To Whom It Concerns:

Plexus is a framework for global art projects.

These projects are simultaneous and syncretic presentations of science and art. Plexus respects and encourages the creative process of research, actualization and documentation.

In essence, Plexus is an interdisciplinary multinational network for artists in the first person related together by art logic.

Made by Leonard Horowitz, Butch Morris, Sandro Dernini, Arturo Lindsay, Lorenzo Pace, David Boyle, Alfa Diallo, Garrick Beck, Joanee Freedom Maggie Reilly, at Joanee Freedom's loft, New York, March 1, 1986.

Document 3

Open Letter to All Artists of the World

We are informing you of the arrival of "The Ship of the Slaves of Art," awaited in Dakar, capital of Senegal, from December 23, 1988 to January 3, 1989.

After the first international event of the "Slaves of Art" in Sardinia, Italy, on July 4, 1987, with the participation of 160 artists from 23 nationalities; after the departure of the metaphoric trip in the history and mythology of "The Ship of the Slaves of Art," from New York on February 1986; there will be a second international event for the artists as independent producers in view of a debate on the Redefinition of Art and the research of a new kind of art contract, as a concrete expression according to the interests of the artists.

This debate will be under the responsibility of the Club Littéraire David Diop and of the ANAPS, National Association of the Visual Artists of Senegal.

Within the scope of this international event all artists are invited to participate to realize the Plexus Art Co-Opera N°5, "The Electromagnetic Serpent," a simultaneous and synchronized presentation of art and science, which will be presented as a parade-show on January 1, 1989, in the island of Gorée, Dakar.

In the island of Gorée, in the House of the Slaves, the final act will be performed as a homage to the freedom of the Human Being.

The outcomes of this event will be reported to the world.

Therefore, Plexus International launches a call for all artists of the world to come to Dakar, from December 23, 1988, to January 3, 1989, to contribute to the opening of a credit line in favour of the International Art Community through the creation of an Art World Bank.

Made by Langouste MBow, Youssouph Traorè, Sandro Dernini, Zulu MBaye, Assane MBaye, Tairo Diop, Bibi Seck and others, at the Club Littéraire David Diop, Dakar, Senegal, August 30, 1988.

Document 4

Letter by the Minister of Culture of Senegal

REPUBLIQUE DU SENEGAL
UN PEUPLE - UN BUT - UNE FOI

MINISTERE DE LA CULTURE

N° 43 /M.C./CMC

Dakar, le

Le Ministre

à

au Dr Sandro DERNINI
Chaiperson
PLEXUS International
Art urban Forum, INC
à New-York

Monsieur,

J'accuse réception de votre lettre en date du 16/8/91,
relative à l'ouverture d'un Fonds International de l'Art à Gorée.

Je voudrais vous exprimer toute ma satisfaction, de
l'heureuse initiative que vous avez prise en œuvrant pour le
dialogue des cultures et une meilleure compréhension entre tous
les peuples du monde.

Comme suite, je voudrais vous informer de mon accord de
principe tout en vous signalant que mon département ne prévoit pas
de prise en charge financière pour ce type d'opération.

En vous en souhaitant bonne réception, je vous prie
d'agréer, Monsieur, l'expression de mes sentiments distingués./-

Houstapha KA

Ampliation :

- Son Excellence Youssouph BARO
Ambassadeur du Sénégal à Rome
Dakar, November, 1991.

Columbus Open Call for Reconciliation and Well Being in the XXI Century

From the 9th to the 11th of October 1992 on the invitation of The 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium of New York, with the University of Rome "La Sapienza", The University of Cagliari in Sardinia, the University of Saint Louis in Senegal, and the International Institute of Epistemology "La Magna Grecia" in Crotone-Rome, in collaboration with the Institute of Italian Encyclopaedia Treccani, the Institute for the Italian American Experience, the Consortium for the Tourist Development of the City of Carloforte, the Consortium CIFRA, Plexus International Network, C.U.A.N.D.O. Inc. Cultural Community Civic Center Lower East Side New York, and with the support of the City of Carloforte, the Presidency of the Government of Sardinia County and of the Presidency of the County Council of Sardinia and of the District of Cagliari, We have met in Carloforte, on the island of San Pietro, off of Sardinia, as individuals from 3 continents: America, Africa, and Europe (including Russia). We reflected upon the voyages of Christopher Columbus to the Americas as an issue of "Reconciliation" for the Well Being of the Twenty-First Century, through the following program of round tables and presentations on: Cultural navigations; The Departure of a Project of a Mutual Cooperation; An Hypothesis of Reconciliation; The Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations; Europe and the "Historically Others"; Well Being, Ethics, Health, Nutrition and Quality of Life; The Memorial of Goree-Almandies Project; A Plexus Proposal of Cooperation.

We, as participants of the Columbus Reconciliation Forum, are making the following Open Call from San Pietro Island to the World:

- 1) The political and economic order of the past 500 years since the landing of Christopher Columbus in the Americas, having failed to bring about the necessary Reconciliation and Well Being of the people of the world, we, as individuals, call upon other individuals and communities to challenge the existing order.
- 2) In order to achieve the synthesis of cultures and the true understanding of differences which are converging in a new identity for human rights in the 21st Century, all people as individuals and communities must assume responsibility for the life of their community. Those nations that impose a racial identity are the primary obstacle to Reconciliation.
- 3) Unwarranted imposition by governments and social and political organizations on individuals and communities must be avoided in order to enhance Human Rights, Dignity and Solidarity.
- 4) We declare that sustainable development obtained with full respect for natural resources, can guarantee an acceptable quality of life to the future generations of the world.
- 5) We are conscious that women of the third world, as well as other regions, are the key producers of the economy in their respective countries, but they are not involved in making decisive societal choices. This situation has resulted in the deterioration of their economic, social and health condition. We call for all necessary help for their Well Being.
- 6) We commit ourselves to the development of new channels of communication to make it possible for the people of all nations and cultures to conduct free and independent exchange as a means of "Reconciliation."
- 7) We support individual and community projects dealing with Human Rights and Reconciliation.

Therefore we issue an OPEN CALL for the development of creative approaches to the empowerment of the individual and of the community. We need alternative visions to attain

the ROUTE CORRECTION necessary to bring about the true meaning of the CALL FOR RECONCILIATION and WELL BEING in the XXIst Century.
Issued at the Columbus Reconciliation Forum "The Well Being in the XXI Century,"
Carloforte, San Pietro Island, Sardinia, October 11, 1992.

Document 6

Marconi Open Call for the Well Being of the XXI Century

*We are a single, interdependent, world-wide specie. Whether we like it or not,
We are intimately bound up with each other around the earth.*

East and west, north and south, Our fate is linked together.

Thus, a global view of human health is more essential now than ever before.

From the 37th WHO Assembly on "The Role of University for Health for All."

Issued on board the Elisabeth boat, at the event "Navigating Global Cultures,"
harbour of Cagliari, Sardinia, September 21, 1995.

APPENDIX C

CHRONOLOGY OF PLEXUS ACTIVITIES

June 13, 1982, New York, 516 West 25 Street. Presentation of Plexus project by Sandro Dernini, Richard Flood, Roberto Brambilla, Gianni Longo, with *A Modern Sacrifice* party.

December 31, 1982, New York, 516 West 25 Street. *Garden of Fuzz*, a party performance featuring Ann Magnuson and John Sex.

February, 1983, New York, 516 West 25 Street. Preview opening of Plexus performance space with *It's not the Hat – It's the Hair*, a dance performance by Marika Blossfeldt.

April 19-May 1, 1983, New York, 516 West 25 Street. Opening of Plexus performance space with *Turtle Dreams*, world premiere performance by Meredith Monk.

April 25 1983, New York, Plexus performance space. *Cathode Cruel* and *Birth*, a new music and theatre performance by Fiction Music Theatre and Susan Landau.

May 2, 1983, New York, Plexus performance space. *Disorder /Discipline /Future*, an art performance and exhibition by Gianfranco Mantegna.

May 13-22, 1983, New York Plexus performance space. *Pavlov*, a theatre performance directed by Charles Guarino, featuring Robert Younger, Abby Chevalley, Frances Goodwin, Stanley Kaplan, Charles Lanti, Marylyn Minter, Gerald Nichols, Jeanne Quinn, Cathy Stoopd.

May 23, 1983, New York, Plexus performance space. *Boomba*, a theatre performance by Ily Huemer.

May, 1983, New York, Plexus performance space. *Labyrinth*, an art installation performance by Paolo Buggiani.

May 27, 1983, New York, Plexus performance space. *Spectre Nymph* and *Living Set*, an dance performance by Ellen Fisher.

June 2, 1983, New York, Plexus performance space. *Mission Impossible* by Ily Huemer.

June, 1983, New York, Plexus performance space. *New Directions*, a multi-media program featuring: *Raw Saniolam, a Cruel WarGame*, an audiovisual performance by Giancarlo Schiaffini and Lorenzo Taiuti; *How She Sees It*, an art performance by Arleen Schloss; *Order Eat with Des's Refuses*, an art performance coordinated by Michael Kean; *Moving Still Film* a film screening by Richard Sanca; *Up & Down the Elevator*, an art performance by Stephen Wischert.

June, 1983, New York, Plexus performance space. *Codes of Abstract Conduct*, a new music performance by Craig Burk Group; *Darts*, a new music performance by John Zorn.

July 22-24, 1983, New York, Plexus performance space. *Babylon Breakdown Babylon*, 3 day of Art Reggae Festival, featuring Mutabaruka, Mojanya, Thomas Pinnock, Calabash, Kwame & Jahpan, Dreaklock Chronicle.

From November to December, 1983, New York, Plexus performance space. *Plexus 6, a Zone for the Next Zone*, a weekly multimedia art cabaret, with Mitch Ross as master of ceremony, featuring Ken Hiratsuka, Willoughby Sharp, Wolfgang Staele, Susan Britton, Marty Watts, Maroon Azuri.

February 11, 1984, New York, Plexus Performance space. *Science & Art*, a multimedia show by VAP.

February 14-19, 1984, New York, Plexus performance space. *Leap of Faith*, an epic theatre project, presented by International Performance Actions, coordinated by Willem Brugman, featuring Nila Greco, Pooh Kaye, Max Blagg, Sylvie Pomaret, Willem Brugman.

March 1, 1984, New York, 516 West 25 Street. Closing of the Plexus performance space.

June 13, 1984, New York, 523 East 6 Street. Opening of The Shuttle Theatre by Sandro Dernini, Giuseppe Sacchi, Brian Goodfellow, Karl Berger.

June, 1984, New York, The Shuttle Theatre. A weekly music performances by Genevieve Waite with Robert Arron.

June, 1984, New York, The Shuttle Theatre. *Love Songs, Nothing Else, Love Songs*, a weekly music cabaret performance by Tony Love; and *Tigressa*, the all-female rhythm explosion.

July, 1984, New York, The Shuttle Theatre. *Girls Night Out*, an art exhibition, curated by Carlo Mc Cormick, featuring artworks by Keiko Bonk, Jane Bowman, Nancy Brooks Brody, Patrice Caire, Andrea Evans, Manuela Filliaci, Barbara Gary, Jasmin Harwood-Ramirez, Pat Hearn, Annie Herron, Babette Holland, Rebecca Howland, Tessa Hughes-Freeland, Ruth Kligman, Anita Lane, Karen Luna, Gracie Mansion, Lisa McDonald, Mette Medson, Marylyn Minten, Judy Rifka, Hope Sandrow, Caren Scarpulla, Nina Seligman, Jo Shane, Kiki Smith, Stacie Teele, Christine Zounek, Rhonda Zwillinger.

July, 1984, New York, The Shuttle Theatre. *The Pirates of Techno Hell* and *The Final Upside Down Shown*, art performances by Julius Klein; *Time Art*, performance by Ralston Farina.

July, 1984, New York, The Shuttle Theatre. *Peter Grass*, art exhibition curated by Steve Kaplan.

August, 1984, New York, The Shuttle Theatre. *Bernd Naber*, art exhibition curated by Steve Kaplan.

From July to December, 1984, New York, The Shuttle Theatre. A music program by Sound Unity coordinated by William Parker, featuring Billy Bang, Jemeel

Moondoc, Rashid Al-Akbar, Petra Plecko, Rrata Christin Jones, the Gamala Taki Band with Karl Berger, Babatunde Olatunji, Dennis Charles, Peter Kowald, Charles Gayle, Rashied Ali, William Parker, Roy Campbell, Daniel Carter, Rashied Bakr, Karen Borca, Jackson Krall, Ellen Christi, Alex Lodico, Patsy Parker, John Hagen, Dicky Dworkin, Dave Hofstra.

From July to December, 1984, New York, The Shuttle Theatre. *Long Shot*, a poetry series presented by Nuyorican Poets Cafe, featuring Allen Ginsberg, Mickey Pinero, Miguel Algarin, Amiri Baraka, Pedro Pietri, Quincy Troupe, Robert Press, Bernadette Mayer, Andy Clausen.

From August to December, 1984, New York, The Shuttle Theatre. *The Artist in the First Person*, an independent art exhibition program made with Joan Walthermath, Luca Pizzorno, Julius Klein, Ralston Farina, Mickey Pinero, Arleen Schloss.

August, 1984, New York, The Shuttle Theatre. *The Art World is a Jungle*, 120 performances of 30 seconds or 60 performances of 60 seconds.

August 25, 1984, New York, 523 East 6 Street. *In Order to Survive*, a block association street event, performed by William Parker, Miguel Algarin, Karl Berger, Bruce Richard Nugent, Roy Campbell, Jemeel Moondoc, Arleen Schloss, David Street, Alfa Diallo, Sara Farley, Sandro Dernini, Giuseppe Sacchi, James Oliver Jones Jr., Dennis Charles, Nelson Oeundy.

September, 1984, New York, The Shuttle Theatre. *Voice of Ammericka*, a cabaret program featuring: *Uncle Sam* by Dave Street; *Taxi Cabaret* by Rockets Redglare; *The Poet Himself* by Marty Watt.

September, 1984, New York, The Shuttle Theatre. *The Lower East Side Music, Poetry, Arts Festival '84*, presented by Sound Unity, Nuyorican Poets Cafe, Artists International Communication, featuring Butch Morris, Gunter Hampel, Nelson Oeundy, Karl Berger, William Parker, Miguel Algarin, Jemeel Moondoc, Brian Smith, Arleen Schloss, Robert Aaron, Ahvan Henry, Miguel Pinero, Billy Bang, Pleasure. An art show was installed by Alfa Diallo and Jean Cyriaqueque.

October 19, 1984, New York, The Shuttle Theatre. Plexus started again its activities.

From October to December, 1984, New York, The Shuttle Theatre. *Body Driven*, a dance project by Betsy Hulton, *Frame of Life*, a filmmakers program, featuring: Andrew Bergen, Julius Klein, Christine Vachon, Susan Graes, Liza Bear. *Collage of Happening*, a performance program, featuring: *Time Art* by Ralson Farina, *Uncle Sam* by Dave Street, *The Upside Down Show* by Julius Klein, *Do you think Nixon knows people were happier before he was president?* by Paul Miller, and *Alien Comic*. *The Last Song of the Swan*, a playwrights program, curated by Giuseppe Sacchi, featuring: *Soliloquies and Others Words Said at the Time* by Rei Povod; *King Salmon* by James A. Doogherty; *Hoodlum Hearts* by Louis E. Griffith; *Rent a Coffin* by Pedro Pietri. *Mephistopheles: The Artist in the First Person*, featuring *Escape from Purgatory*, by Ralston Farina; *Mountains Men, Dreams, Magic Music* by Leoponar Witlarge; *Slimming Window* by Julius Klein and *Samarcanda* by Luca Pizzorno, *Cantos*, a poetry program; and *Magic Flutes*, a music program, with Don Cherry.

December, 1984, New York, The Shuttle Theatre. 2° *Lower East Side Jazz Festival '84*, featuring: Chevere Makun Chevere, Michael Bocian Quartet, Ernst Bier Quartet, Jemeel Moondoc's Orchestra with Butch Morris, Jim Pepper Quartet, Karl Berger's Rhythm Changes with Ingrid Sertso, Jazz Doctors with Billy Bang, Frank Lowe,

Wilber Morris and Thurman Barker, Juny Booth, Peter Kowald Sextet, Roy Campbell's Inner Force Band, James McCoy and an art jam by Arturo Lindsay.

January 16, 1985, New York, New York University. *The Artist in the First Person*, a lecture introduced by Sandro Dernini and performed by Ralston Farina, Paolo Buggiani, William Parker, Ken Hiratsuka, Peter Grass, Joan Waltermath, Willoughby Sharp, Luca Pizzorno, Arleen Schloss, Julius Klein, Leo Panar, James Mc Coy, Amir Bey, Liz and Val, Snoky Tate.

March, 1985, New York, The Shuttle Theatre. *DADA*, a poetry music workshop by Valery Oisteanu, with Otto Von Ruggins and Lubisha Ristici.

May, 1985, New York, CUANDO, 9 Second Avenue. *Third Lower East Side Music Festival 1985*, in collaboration with Sound Unity, Plexus/Shuttle and the Lower East Side Community Music Workshop. It featured: Roy Campbell and William Hooker Duo, Jeanne Lee and Voices, William Parker Septet, Hellen Christi, Kral Trio, Jeemel Moondoc Quartet with Bern Nix, William Parker, Ed Blackwell, Luther Thomas Quintet, Bangception with Billy Bang and Dennis Charles, WilberForce with Eli Fountain, Vincent Chauncy, Wilber Morris, Trio with Wayne Horvits, Bobby Previte, Butch Morris, Frank Lowe Trio, Rashid Al Akbar Trio, James Oliver Jones Jr, and Ethica with Myrna Renaud, Rashid Al Akbar, Roy Campbell, Dennis Charles, Mabo Suzuki.

June 13, 1985, New York, CUANDO. *Goya Time, 1985, New York*, an art opera, by Gretta Safarty, Sandro Dernini and Butch Morris, featuring Gloria Mc Lean, Rajaa Fischer, Lynne Kanter, Antonia Iacchia, Karen Kuykendall, Melva Max, Michael Mayers, Pedro Cano, Franco Ciarlo, Baldo Deodato, Michael Keane, Anne Jepsen, Julius Klein, Jrelle Kraus, Raken Leaves, Judy Levy, Joe Lewis, Mike Lewis, Luca Pizzorno, Jill Lynne, Mekki Schmidt, Berns Naber, Vernita Nemec, Robert Parker, Barnaby Ruhe, Eve Vaterlaus, Robert Younger.

July, 1985, New York, The Shuttle Theatre. *Castigat Ridendo Mores*, a open contest for comedians by Giuseppe Sacchi.

July 17, 1985, New York, CUANDO. *In the Night of No Moon: Purgatorio Show '85 New York*, an open call for the future international community house, a three hour event with over 350 artists, dedicated to Ralston Farina, John Rocchio, Tessa Huxley, Saint Mark's Women's Health Cooperative, Billy Sleaze, Ruben Lopez, Kyong, L.A.N.D., Max Hardeman, Frank Shiffreen, Rolando Briseno, Fred Floyd, Johnny Edward, Georgine Lopez, Franco Ciarlo, Bacha Plewinska, Russel Epprecht, Lindy Well, Luis Batances, Cadets Of Cuando, Tracy Sherman, Landy Wells. Vincent Group., The Sophist, Cemi Art Folklorico Puertoricana, Jose Rolon, Richard Geigel, Gilberto Reyes, Stevie Flores, Kathleen & William Laziza, Richard Heisler, Hillary Mostert, Adam Noildt, Michele Siboun, Peter Cummings, Christa Gamper, Solvig, Casa Nada, Anita Steckel, Jill Fleischman, Lynne Kanter, Nancy Aacron, Grady Alexis, George Reynolds, Joe Strand, Teresa, Christofia, Sophy Pujedet, Patsy Parker, William Parker, Jemeel Moondoc, Richard Bruce Nuggent, Greta Sarfaty, Ray Kelly, Eric Miller and Company, Alan Saret, Butch Morris, Henry Threadgill, Maya Eizen, Katie Sutphin, Eddie Tafel, Chris Ieexa, Silka X, Peter Honchaurk. Steve Hugglund, Mike Zwicky, Penelope Wehrli, Lairice Persica, Orski Drozi, Charles Alleroft, Eve Teitelbaum, Andy Somma, Leslie Lowe, Rip Hayman, Martin Wheeler, Eve Vaterlaus, Inghild Karlsen, Yakya Alail-Majjal, Doctor Hart, Steve Mill Fein, Amanda Marr, Aekim Knispel, Marcel Fieve, Ken Montgomery, Katie O'looney, Tepi Rosen, Eli Alli, Mitch Corber, Aigar Kildiss, Gretta Soke, Howie Solo, P.Michael

Keane, Sharon Take, Jan Schmidt, J.D. Rage, Krzysztos Zarebski, Krystyna Jachniewicz, Jared Shithead, James Oliver Jones Jr., Sachie Akizawa, Brian Bacchiocchi, Henry Benvenuti, Felix Campos, David Channon, Sandra Clothier, Aurora Corteses, Michael Coulter, Carla Davis, Ronnie Farley, Richard Gins, Lauen Hancher, Leonard Horowitz, Sonia Irizarry, Eric Johnson, Chieni Kawshima, James Nares, Ashim Kinspel, Melinda Levokove, Ramu Lunda, Buddy Mailander, Jerry Pagane, Lizz Paris, Teppi Rosen, Salvador Rosillo, Angel Ibanez, Andy Smith, Diane Spanagona, Wolfgang Staehle, Barbra Yoshida, Francis Alenikoff, Maria Cutrona, Gloria Mclean, Yves Musard, Myrna Renaud, Viola Viscardi, Enos, Katie Korngold, Storme Webber, S.A. Martin, M. Spencer Richards, Jim Wasserman, Rob Brown, Charles Compo, Feron Dolce. John E. Edwards, Ronnie Farley, Haki Jami, Jasper Mcgruder, Sally Whit, Judy Stewart, Leo Panar, Margot Leverett, Steve Wodson, Mark Wolf, Matt Shipp, Peggy Yunque, James Gill, Dragon Illic, Ricardo Geigel, Nisei Goju, Ruju Doju, Foster Perry, David Brill. Arnold Wechsler, Louis Lopes, Carlton Bright, Marilyn Minter, Calvin Thompson, Sheldon Moskovici, Robert Bery, Ivan Jensen, Mindy Gluck, Nancy Sullivan, Isak Ladegrad, Willy Van Derlinden, Frank Rabino, Nicola Naimo, Ellen Levine, Patrice Lorentz, Habib Tiwoni, Marcel Fieve, Suzanne Halvorson, Hope Martin, Lilliana Luboya, David Hatchet, Curtis Woods, Jeanie Bruno, Grady Alexis, Frederick Kohl, Penny Ward, Sybil Goldstein, Miguel Ferrando, Cindy Luggery, Bri Hurley, Bonnie Van Allen, Joe Alfredo, Noel Mapstead, Ken Montgomery, Jim C., Margarite Massa, Brian Goodfellow, Margaret Bazura, Felix Mckennedy, Shindy Henry, Ebba Elander, Michael Carter, Sarina Bachino, Bill Rabinowitz, Orsina Sforza, Tod Evan, Ronnie Farcey. Christof Kohlhofer. James Romberger, Mara Leader, Geoff Gilmore, Michael Ross, Takao Saito, Red Spot, Alex Pinkerson, Tom Warren, Dave Gesualdi, Melva Max, Vesna Golubovic, Michael Ron, Andre Roskovich, Robert Arson, Patrice Thompson, Martin Wong, Takako Azuma, Niko Smith, Amy Paskin, Maya Eizen, Maureen Eckert, Alex Rottner, Michael Carter, Selwyn Garraway, Albert De'pas, Shuder Henry, Linus Corragio, Mark Kostabi. Liz and Val, Dean Benesh, Swieta Barrinko, James Daglish, Gregor Hanoyok, Bernd Naber, Fredda Mekul, Matte Madsen, Mekki Schmitt, Mona Schmitt, Arturo Lindsay, Ken Hirayuma, Antoine Desparchis, Manada Ma, Nikki Ma, Pamela Kladzyh, Cris And Homo, Conrad Vogel, Diane Dunbar, Luca Pizzorno, Robert Parker, Joseph Nechvatal, Rhys Chatham, Bradley Eros, Aline Mare, Anne Jepsen, Tenesh, Amir Bey, Fabio Della Sala, Wes Power, Snuky Tate, Hanne Laurdisen, Sandro Dernini, R.T. Livingston, George Chaikin, Ellen Christi, Mark Hooper, Willem, Samoa, Julius Klein, Dave Street, Luis Tropa, R.T., Yuri Karpalov, Colin De Land, Nina Connolly, Vincent Chancey, Judy Levy, Alpha And Omega Dance, Taher Shafie, The Family Theatre, Maxim Felix Camillo, Arleen Schloss, Kali Susan Faistenau, Melody D'arnell, Dana Simon, Susan Britton, Zwicky Haggelum, R.V. Ardsol, Al Dimartino, Willoughby Sharp, Courtney Harmel, Sal Frinzi, Paul Fanfarillo, Richard Milone, Dab And Angela, Debbie Crowell, Suckcess, Regina Smith, Chief Nelson Oceundy.

November, 1985, New York, The Shuttle Theatre. A multi-facet art workshop, organized by Giuseppe Sacchi.

November 23, 1985, New York, 523 East 6th Street. The building of the Shuttle Theatre burned in a fire accident.

February 27, 1986, New York, CUANDO. *Eve, an Art Opera, about Escape for Donna Purgatorius from 1986 Anno Domini by the Multinational Chain Gang of Downtown N.Y.*, featuring Alfa Diallo, Alpha Omega 1-7, Theatrical Dance Co., Francis Alenikoff, Miguel Algarin, Nancy Alvsick, Yoshiki Araki, Jane Aruns, Tom Bahring, Bernadette Baptists, Erica Baum, Margaret Bazura, Tsvi Ben-Aretz, Winnie Berrios, Dean Benosh,

Benta, Nicholais Bergery, Jeff Berren, Silvio Betti, Karen Borca, David Boyle, Yvette Braithwaite, Marion Branjis, Mark Brennan, George Breakfast, China Burney, Mark Burns, Paolo Baggiani, Cadets of CUANDO, George Calle, Carson Ferri Grant, Andrew Castucci, David Mora Catlett, Mitch Corber, Aurora Cortese, Larry Crombez, Count Caesar, Demo Moe, George Chaikin, Franco Ciarlo, Teddy Clark, Barbara Coleman, Bill Conway, Linus Coraggio, Willie Correa, Nilde Cortez, Jamie Dalglish, Darrell Daniels, Wendy Dann, Melody D'Arnell, Bruce Davis, Richard Dawkin, Jeff Day, Rick Little & The Loose, Ricky Dejesus, Fabio Della Sala, Baldo Deodato, Sandro Dernini, Savier Diaz, Stephen Di Lauro, Al DiMartino, Bob Dombrowski, Kirn Douthett, Freddie the Dreamer, Monique Dulau, Elaine Elekoff, Lee Ellickson, Michael Enns, Russel Epprecht, Marina Epstein, FA-Q, Bill Fein, Carol Fleishman, Eli Fountain, Bionca Florelli, Laren Gabor, Christa Camper, Lori Terzine, Jeff Gilmore, G.Gilmore, Jay Godfrey, Katherine Gordon, Robert Gurtler III, Ken Hiratsuka, Hara Lampos, Havakawa, R.I.P. Hayman, Richard Heisler, Betti Sue Hertz, E.F. Higgins III, Anna Homler, Leonard Horowitz, Jason Hwang, Antonia Iacchia, Jack Boy, Anna Jepsen, Jill 125, Suellen Johnson, Baird Jones, Frank Kanfman, Lynne Kanter, Frank Kaufman, Tsujii Katsu, P. Michael Keane, Ray Kelly, Connie Kieltyka, Julius Klein, Jerelle Kraus, Henner Kuckuck, Kwok, Lamont Lamberger, Hanne Lauridsen, William & Cathline Laziza, Judy Levy, Arturo Lindsay, Alex Locadio, Frank Lowe, Robert MacMillan, Paolo Maltese, Michele Mahrer, Margaret Massa, Gianfranco Mantenga, Marcos Margall, Amy Marx, Robert Marinez, Dona McAdams, Gloria McLean, Tom McDonald, Missing Foundation, Myra Medford, Sue Suzanne Messim, Eric Miller, Richard Malone, Maria Mingalona, MIO, Tyrone Mitchell, Bob Monti, Janet Morgan, Butch Morris, Wilber Morris, Charles Morron, Bernd Naber, Nada, Pamela Nadeau, Noriko, Bruce Richard Nugent, Nuyorican Poets Cafe, Mart Oshima, Deborah Ossoff, Lorenzo Pace, Monique & Robert Parker, G. Pegor, Luca Pizzorno, Plantela, Wes Power, Ronald Pratt, Angela Pringle, Kirsten Randolph, Maggie Reilly, Angela Repelant, Alva Rogers, Rogon, Antonio Romano, Tony Roos, Salvador Rosilo, Peter Ruhf, Barnaby Ruhe, Saunders Shaw, Francesco Santinelli, Shalom, Emelio Schlaepfer, Arleen Schloss, Mekki Schmidt, Frank Shifreen, Ann Shostrom, Michele Siboun, George W. Simmons, Brian Smith, Nico Smith, Leonid Sokov, Carmine Spera, Anita Steckel, Alan Steinfeld, Joe Strand, Sue Strande, Dave Street, Elyse Taylor, Eve Teitelbaun, Tenesh, Kate Tastrophe, Bill Thompson, Seth Tobbacman, Tomoko Toki, Toyo, Tovey, Katsuu Tsujii, Carline Vago, Helene Valentin, Juilius Valiunas, Angela Valorio, L. Van Binder, Claude Van Lingen, Eve Vaterlaus, Penny Ward, Willem Brugman, World Famous Blue Jays, Karen Yager, James Zoller, Michael J. Zwicky.

May 15, 1986, Dakar, Centre Culturel Africain M. Sy. 1987: *Du Purgatoire ou Paradis, Voyage de l'Art dans la Mythologie Universelle*, a Plexus presentation by Sandro Dernini, with Langouste M'Bow, Kre M'Baye, Mangone NDiaye, Gianni Villella.

September 1, 1986, Cagliari, Sardinia, Cooperativa Centro Storico. 1987 *Fire!! Il Serpente di Pietra, Fire!! an Universal Mythological Art Journey*, a Plexus presentation by Sandro Dernini, Gaetano Brundu, Ciccì Borghi.

September 4, 1986, Rome, Magazzini Generali. *For a New Cappella Sistina*, a Plexus presentation by Sandro Dernini, Armando Soldaini, Silvio Betti.

October 23, 1986, New York, Frank Shifreen's studio. *Plexus Serpent Open Call*, an art action by Leonard Horowitz, Sandro Dernini, Helen Valentin, Arturo Lindsay, David Boyle, Mitch Ross, Marcos Margal and Frank Koufman.

October 25, 1986, New York, Fusion Arts. *Eating Art, Part 1: Fresh Mozzarella, A Refracted Self Portrait*, an art performance by Sandro Dernini with Lynne Kanter, Eve

Vaterlaus, Donald Sherman, Mitch Ross, Gianfranco Mantegna, Joan Waltermath, Franco Ciarlo and Gaby, Paolo Buggiani, Cosimo Leo di Ricatto, Charlie Monrow, Bernd Naber.

December 12-14, 1986, New York, Alchemical Theatre. *Fourth Lower East Side Music Festival*, by Sound Unity, the Lower East Side Community Music Workshop and Plexus, featuring: Wilber Force, William Parker Ensemble, D.C. YA YA Band, Charles Gale, Zane Massey Quartet, Luther Thomas Sextet, Ted Daniel, Joe Morris, Jemeel Moondoc, and Roy Campbell, with a jazz portraits exhibition by Judy Levy and Anita Steckel, and an art jam by Joan Waltermath and Ciccì Borghi.

January 17, 1987, New York, Fusion Arts. *Plexus Book*, a performance by Paolo Buggiani, Charlie Morrow, Elisabeth Rodgers, Shalom Newman and Greta Safarty.

January, 1987, Amsterdam, Cosai Production. Plexus presentation by Willem Brugman.

February 13, 1987, Cagliari, Dessi Studio. *Bring Your Serpent*, an art installation by Gaetano Brundu, Ciccì Borghi, Anna Saba, Franco Meloni, Randi Hansen, Piernicola Cocco, Antonello Dessi, Luciano Rombi, Enrico Pau, Luigi Mazzarelli.

February 18, 1987, New York, Patrizia Anichini Gallery. *Do You Think it is Possible to Eat Andy Warhol by Eating an Campbell Soup Can?*, a phenomenological inquiry performance by Sandro Dernini with Willoughby Sharp, Peter Grass, Bernd Naber, Lynne Kanter, Franco Ciarlo, Helen Valentin, Patrizia Anichini, Joan Waltermath, Donald Sheridan, Souyun Yi, Carol Drury, Amy Paskin, Christian Chiansa.

March, 1987, Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University, College of Fine Arts, Loge. *No Show-Biz. Italian Plexus Group*, a presentation organized by Bruce Breland with visiting artist Sandro Dernini.

June 29, 1987, Rome, Teatro in Trastevere. *Il Serpente di Pietra*, a Plexus presentation by Gianni Villella, Carlo Cusatelli, Pino Licastro, Paolo Maltese, Willem Brugman, Shalom Neuman, Luc Lerouge, Miguel Algarin, Arturo Lindsay, Giovanna Ducrot, Armando Soldaini, Sandro Dernini.

June 30, 1987, Rome, Streets of Trastevere, *Il Serpente di Roma*, a happening parade performance by Arturo Lindsay, Lorenzo Pace, Maggie Reilly, Miguel Algarin, Louis Lopez, Sandro Dernini, Willem Brugman, Alessandro Figurelli and Alikì, Armando Soldaini, Gianni Villella, Giovanna Ducrot, Alex Carmeno, Joelle Brun Cosme, Jocelyn Fiset, Jean Claud Monnier, Elisabeth Morcellet, Lello Albanese.

July 1-4, 1987, Gavoi, Sardinia, Sanctuary of Sa Itria. *Il Serpente di Pietra*, first international art slaves market show, with the participation of 160 artists, featuring Hakin Abbaci, Lello Albanese, Miguel Algarin, Albino Angioi, Fakher Al Koulsi, Artemis, Anagnostopoulos, Roberto Annechini, Stefano Asili, Gianni Atzeni, Isabelle Baeckeroot, Fabi Bandini, R.M.Barbarosa Rabaga, Rudy Barboncini, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Nyal Binclixen, Andrea Boldrini, Graziano Bracale, Marco Vella Brega, Bruce Breland, Willem Brugman, Joelle Brun Cosme, Gaetano Brundu, Luisa Brunetti, Antonio Caboni, Danna Call, Giovanna Caltagirone, Dino Candelo, Giovanna Canevari, Andrea Cao, Annamaria Caracciolo, Alex Carmeno, Paolo Col angeli, Luigi Concu, Carmine Conte, Nanni Cortassa, Graziano Crecale, Carlo Culatelli, Mattia Culatelli, Dax Group, Giovanni Delogu, Giovanni Maria Denti, Sandro Dernini, Antonello Dessi, Diagonale Espace, Giorgio Di Mauro, Alessandro Di Todaro, Pierluigi Di Todaro, Robert Dunn, John Edwards, Karin Eggers, Marco Fabiano,

Daniela Fantini, Leonardo Fava, Vittorio Fava, Alessandro Figurelli, Jocelyn Fiset, Marcello Frajoli, Bernard Francois, Liliana Franquelli, Galavision, Paolo Gallina, Augusto Gandini, Marzia Gandini, Margherita Gelfi, Khalife Ghada, Massimo Ghiani, Valerio Ghiani, Elvio Ghirigozzi, Didier Gokart, Rosanna Granata, Stefano Grassi, Guileme Marie Greco, Antonio Grimaldi, Gristolu, Gruppo Polmone Pulsante, Randi Hansen, Hannelte Holdensen, John Howard, Regina Hubner, Massimo Iovinella, Berit Jansen, Faramarz Janhangir, Vito Lella, Renata Leoni, Luc Lerouge, Mario Lido, Arturo Lindsay, Gabriella Locci, Luis Lopes, Sabina Maccuri, Grazia Magnani, Paolo Maltese, Lamberto Manganello, Giampiero Maoddi, Claudio Marani, Giuseppe Marini, Luigia Mastelloni, Luigi Mazzarelli, Assane MBaye, Loredana Melis, Gianfranco Melis, Franco Meloni, Valeria Meloni, Susanna Micozzi, Carlo Moi, Jean Claud Monnier, Elisabeth Morcellet, Marco Murgia, Maurizio Murgia, Wanda Nazzari, Shalom Newman, Carla Nurchis, Franco Nuti, Tony Occhiello, Orange, Antonello Ottonello, Albertino Pace, Lorenzo Pace, Alessandro Pallotta, Augusta Passatelli, Marco Vinicio Passatelli, Massimo Pietrucci, Raffaele Piras, Bruno Pittau, Alfonso Pizzoleo, Riccardo Polimeri, Andrea Portas, Claudio Prati, Karen Pritchett, Gianfranco Quadrini, Cesario Rachador, Elvi Ratti, Maggie Reilly, Vittorio Rella, Giuseppe Rizzutto, Salvatore Rosello, Phil Rostek, Tuna Marcia Rostek, Anna Saba, Graziano Salerno, Angela Sanna, Salvatore Sanna, Gino Sanpaolesi, Grazia Santi, Basilio Scalas, Mariangela Sedda, Piergavino Sedda, Andrea Selis, Micaela Serino, Greco Shyslaine, Hilla Simonitto, Britt Smelvaer, Armando Soldaini, Tore Soru, Laura Squarcia, Teatro degli Opposti, Susanna Talayero, Francoise Tesmoingt, Christophe Thibaudeau, Aliko Thrumulopulos, Saverio Ungheri, Vincenzo Valentino, Verrieres Association, Gianni Vilella, Silvie Zampolini, Massimo Zanasi, Massimo Zucchi, Salvatore Zurru, Rajo Wurns.

December 23, 1987, Dakar, Auditorium INSEPS. Plexus presentation by Youssouph Traoré, Sandro Dernini, Pathé Diop, Assane MBaye, artworks by Kre MBaye, Langouste MBow, Seni MBaye.

February 20, 1988, New York, CUANDO. *A Redefinition of a Campbell Soup Can*, a performance art installation by Lorenzo Pace, Leonard Horowitz, Lynne Kanter, Sandro Dernini, Tony Noughera and Loisada Samba Band, Wess Power, Barnaby Ruhe, Frank Shifreen, Anita Steckel, Helen Valentin, Sidney Silva.

May 21, 1988, New York, Rivington School. *Open Call for Plexus International Art Slavery Manifesto Group Shot*, photo by Ivan Dalla Tana.

June 15, 1988, Rome, Metateatro. *Open Call for Plexus International Art Slavery Manifesto Group Shot*, photo by Adriano Mordenti, performances by Paolo Buggiani and Sandro Dernini.

June 18, Carloforte, Sardinia, Harbour. *Open Call for Plexus International Art Slavery Manifesto Group Shot*, a photo event on board the Elisabeth boat, with Anna Saba, Randi Hansen, Luigi Mazzarelli, Annamaria Caracciolo, Franco Meloni, Armando Soldaini, Giovanna Caltagirone, Antonello Dessi, Andrea Portas, Stefano Grassi, Maria Grazia Medda, Loredana Melis, Pierluigi di Todaro, Tiziana De Giorgi, Zi of the Barone Rosso, Sandro Dernini, Fabrizio Bertuccioli.

June 25, 1988, Rome, Colosseum. *Open Call for Plexus International Art Slavery Manifesto Group Shot*, a photo event with Micaela Serino, Silvia Pellegrini, Carlo Cusatelli, Loreto Pappadia, Antonio Caboni, Sandro Dernini, Andreina Abbondanza, Vittorio Terracina, Fabrizio Bertuccioli.

July 4, 1988, Rome, Il Mago di Oz. *Fatti Nostri negli 80's per i 90's (Made in the 80's for the 90's)*, a Plexus recall performance, by Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Massimo Sarchielli, Sandro Dernini, Bionca Florelli, Giovanna Ducrot, Roberto Federici.

July, 1988, Rome, Gianni Villella's garden. Recovering of Arturo Lindsay buried art messenger.

August 26, 1988, Dakar, Goree, House of the Slaves. *Open Call for Plexus International Art Slavery Manifesto Group Shot*, a photo event, with a ritual art procession from La Medina of Dakar to the House of the Slaves of Gorée, made by 200 participants.

August 30, 1988, Dakar, Club Litteraire David Diop. *Open Letter to the Artists of the World*, written by Youssouph Traore, Zulu M'Baye, Sandro Dernini, Langouste M'Bow, Assane M'Baye, Pathe Diop.

September 23, 1988, New York, Soho, Carmen Miraglia Loft. *Plexus Campbell's Soup_Can*, a presentation by Sandro Dernini.

November 3, 1988, New York, CUANDO. *The Serpent, Purgatorio Show 1988*, first act of the traveling event *the Serpent*, featuring Lorenzo Pace, Miguel Algarin, Shock Troop Theater, Garrick Beck, Jose Rodriguez, Pat Geri Russel, Stephen Di Lauro, Arturo Lindsay, Lynne Kanter, Joanee Freedom, Mitch Ross, Sandro Dernini Leonard Horowitz, Wess Power, Tony Noighera and the Loisada Samba Band, Andrea Grassi, Alfa Diallo, David Boyle, Sara Jackson, Maggie Reilly, Michael Keane, Andrea Grassi, Eve Taitelbaun.

November 11, 1988, New York, Bobst Library of New York University. *Il Viaggio del Serpente*, second act of *the Serpent*, performances by Dinu Ghezzo, Sandro Dernini, Miguel Algarin, Arturo Lindsay, Stephen DiLauro, George Chaikin, Lynne Kanter. It featured an Italian art group show by Marina Cappelletto, Antonia Carmi, Franco Ciarlo, Dionigi Cossu, Ivan Dalla Casa, Baldo Diodato, Cosino Di Leo Ricatto, Roberto Fabricciani, Manuela Filiaci, Dinu Ghezzo, Andrea Grassi, Gianfranco Mantegna, Renato Miceli, Beatrice Muzi, Luca Pizzorno, Renzo Ricchi, Elisabetta Zanelli.

November 14, 1988, Carloforte, Sardinia, Harbour. *La Madonna dello Schiavo*, third act of *the Serpent*, performance on board Elisabeth, with Carlo Dernini, Daniela Sansone and Zi of the Red Baron.

November 17-23, 1988, Cagliari, Piazza San Sepolcro. *Chiamata Aperta Incontri Tra Artisti sul tema Tradizione e Modernità Rivitalizzazione del Centro Storico*, fourth act of *the Serpent*, a street happening by Tommaso Meloni and Antonio Caboni, with participation of Andrea Portas, Daniela Fantini, Valeria and Franco Meloni, Francesco Aymerich.

January 1, 1989, Dakar, Goree, Door of No Return of House of the Slaves. *The Arrival of the Art Slave Boat*, fifth act of *the Serpent*, an art installation and performance by Assane M'Baye, Launguste M'Bow, Youssouph Traore, Awa M'Baye, Sandro Dernini, Franco and Valeria Meloni, Willem Brugman, Anna Piccioni.

January 3, 1989, Dakar, Goree, Entrance of the House of the Slaves. *Open Letter to the Artists of the World*, a reading performance by Zule M'Baye, Willem Brugman, Anna Piccioni.

January 8, 1989, Dakar, Agit Art Atelier of Joe Ouakam. Plexus art installation by Langouste MBow and Sandro Dernini.

January, 1989, Cagliari, Auditorium School of Science, University of Cagliari. Plexus video presentation by Franco Meloni.

March 10, 1989, New York, Anderson Room of New York University. establishment of the 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium by James Finkelstein, John Gilbert, Sandro Dernini, Mico Licastro, Earl S. Davis, Angiola Churchill, David Ecker, Okechukwu Odita, Arturo Lindsay, Bruce Breland, George Chaikin, Jose Rodriguez, Nilda Cortez.

March 10, 1989, New York, CUANDO. *A Plexus Campbell Soup Can Escaping from the Art World Control*, a community report performance by Arturo Lindsay, Miguel Algarin, Sandro Dernini, Okechukwu Odita, Joannee Freedom, Nilda Cortez, Jose Rodriguez, Leonard Horowitz.

April 7, 1989, New York, Rivington School. *The Art World TV Deconstruction/Reconstruction Show: The Rivington School or What?*, a community report performance by Okechukwu Odita, Sandro Dernini, Arturo Lindsay, Maggie Reilly, Ray Kelly, Leonard Horowitz.

May, 1989, New York, Nada School, Lower East Side. *Plexus White Box*, a ritual art performance by Arturo Lindsay, Sandro Dernini, Miguel Algarin, David Boyle, Leonard Horowitz, Wess Power, Stephen DiLauro.

May 25, 1989, New York, Institute of Computer Arts, School of Visual Arts. *1992: The Departure of An Art Human Shuttle For Freedom Journeying to the Realm of a New Planet Called Time -Art*, an international interactive event by George Chaikin, Sandro Dernini, Stephen DiLauro, Leonard Horowitz, Wess Power, David Boyle, Shock Troupe Theatre.

June 25, 1989, Cagliari, Department of Physics, University of Cagliari. *Arrival of the Art Shuttle*, ritual performance by Sandro Dernini, Franco Meloni, Willem Brugman, Sara Jackson, Stephen DiLauro, David Boyle, Antonio Caboni, Tanya Gerstle.

June, 25 1989, Monte Liuru, Sardinia. *La Festa del Sole*, a ritual performance by Antonio Caboni, Willem Brugman, Stephen DiLauro, David Boyle, Sarah Jackson, Tanya Gerstle, Sandro Dernini.

July 1-2, 1989, Rome, Metateatro. *1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte*, an art opera by Stephen DiLauro, with Sarah Jackson, Willem Brugman, Tanya Gerstle, David Boyle, Matthew Schwartz, Antonio Caboni, Giancarlo Schiaffini, Sandro Dernini, Maria Pia Marsala, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Micaela Serino, Annetta Ducrot, Roberto Federici, Loreto Pappadia.

July 4, 1989, Cagliari, Department of Physics, University of Cagliari. *Plexus Black Box Open Call*, a statement issued by Franco Meloni.

February 3, 1990, Rome, Metateatro. *1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte, part two: The Telematic Team*, a performance by Ciro Ciriaco, Maria Pia Marsala, Glauco Benigni, Sandro Dernini, Giancarlo Schiaffini, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Micaela Serino, Loreto Papadia.

February, 1990, Calcata, Rome. *Carneval*, street performance by Maria Pia Marsala, Micaela Serino, Sandro Dernini, Loreto Papadia.

May-June, 1990, Amsterdam, Polen Theatre. *Ethnoreality: Plexus Black Box Ethnoreality*, a performance by Willem Brugman, Frans Evers, Scott Rollins, Jeroen Heuvel, Nadine Lavern and Regina Willense.

June 23-24, 1990, Monte Liuru, Sardinia. *Festa della Pietra Solare*, a performance by Antonio Caboni and Tommaso Meloni.

June 30–July 1, 1990, Rome, Ridotto del Colosseo. *1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte, part three: Plexus Black Box*, an art installation and performances by Willem Brugman, Frans Evers, David Ecker, Arturo Lindsay, Odita Okechukwu, Lynne Kanter, Frank Shifreen, Karl Geiringer, Jeroen Heuvel, Ciro Ciriaco, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Roberto Federici, Piero Cianflone, Carlo Cusatelli, Vittorio Terracina, Fabi, Anna Piccioni, Mauro Brusà, Elsa Rizzi, Victor Ibanez, Antonio Caboni, Antonello Dessi, Andrea Portas, Loreto Papadia, Giancarlo Schiaffini, Paolo Damiani, Maria Pia Marsala and Sandro Dernini.

July 2, 1990, Rome, Metateatro. *Plexus Black Box, a Multicultural Data Bank for la Caravella dell'Arte*, a round table with Frans Evers, Ciro Ciriaco, David Ecker, Okechikwu Odita, Arturo Lindsay, Frank Shifreen, Fabrizio Bertuccioli.

July 4, 1990, Carloforte, Sardinia, City Hall. *1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte, Elisabeth, La Caravella dell'Arte*, presentation to the Mayor by Odita Okechukwu, David E. Ecker, Sandro Dernini.

December 29, 1990, Rome, Teatro in Trastevere. *1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte, part four: Colombina La Caravella Telematica*, a presentation performance to Mons. Dante Balboni by Maria Pia Marsala, Sandro Dernini, Giancarlo Schiaffini, Fabrizio and Simone Bertuccioli, Stelio Fiorenza, Micaela Serino, Mauro Brusa', Rocco Mitraglia, Lidia Biondi, Franco Nuzzo.

February 22, 1991, Rome, Church Madonna del Buon Viaggio. *The Colombina Reconciliation Project Departure*, launched on the occasion of the baptism of Rodolfo Maria Dernini, celebrated by Monsignor Dante Balboni, with Maria Pia Marsala, Sandro Dernini, Rosa Sanfilippo, Carlo Totti and Youssof Baro, ambassador of Senegal in Rome.

July 4, 1991, Carloforte, Sardinia, harbour. *Cambio di Rotta, A Fleet of Projects*, performance on board the Elisabeth by Maria Pia Marsala, Sandro Dernini, Guido Pegna, Ciro Ciriaco, Nadia Campanini, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Maria Grazia Medda, Franco Meloni, Anna Saba, Bianca Laura Petretto.

October 30, 1991, Cagliari, Corso Vittorio Emanuele 56. The opening of *Plexus International Storage*, managed by Gaetano Brundu.

December 14, 1991, Carloforte, Sardinia, harbour. *Recovering Plexus Black Box*, an art action on board the Elisabeth by Carlo Dernini, Piero Cianflone, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Franco Meloni, Stefano Asili, Sandro Dernini.

December 15, 1991, Cagliari, Plexus International Storage. *Opening*, an installation curated by Gaetano Brundu with artworks and relics by Ciro Ciriaco, Piero Cianflone, Sara Ciarron, Micaela Serino, Roberto Federici, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Paolo Buggiani, Luca Pizzorno, Helen Valentin, Leonard Horowitz, Miguel Algarin, Silvio

Betti, David Boyle, Willem Brugman, Frans Evers, Anita Steckel, Ray Kelly, Wess Power, Lorenzo Pace, Eve Vaterlaus, George Chaikin, Barnaby Ruhe, Ralston Farina, Joanee Freedom, Maggie Reilly, Lynne Kanter, Arturo Lindsay, Stephen DiLauro, Ivan Dalla Tana, Adriano Mordenti, Richard Milone, William Parker, Giancarlo Schiaffini, Paolo Damiani, Antonio Caboni, Antonello Dessi, Anna Saba, Andrea Portas, Randi Hansen, Gabriella Locci, Luigi Mazzarelli, Maria Grazia Medda, Anna Maria Caracciolo, Gaetano Brundu, Sandro Dernini, Stefano Asili, Guido Pegna, Franco Meloni, Kre MBaye, Langouste MBow, Youssof Traore, Seni MBaye, Assane MBaye, Carlo Cusatelli, Fabi Bandini, Luigi Attardi, Mauro Brusà, Victor Ibanez, Pippo di Marca, Stelio Fiorenza, Andrea Grassi, Sara Jackson, Malvern Lumsden, Paolo Maltese, Gianfranco Mantegna, Maria Pia Marsala, Elsa Rizzi, Bruce Nugent, Okechukwu Odita, Loreto Papadia, Anna Piccioni, Rivington School.

January 12, 1992, Cagliari, Galleria Comunale d'Arte. *La Posta in Gioco*, a mail art installation performance by Sandro Dernini, Gaetano Brundu, Franco Meloni, Anna Saba, interaction by fax from Rome by Giancarlo Schiaffini and Maria Pia Marsala.

March 13–May 25, 1992, Cagliari, Plexus International Storage. *Plexus Imprinting: A Story 1986-1992*, an art installation made by Anna Saba.

June 13 – September 15, 1992, Cagliari, Plexus International Storage. *Storage Calls New York City*, an art installation made by Gaetano Brundu.

July 4, 1992, Cagliari, Bastioni di Santa Croce. *Bring Your Serpent*, a Plexus call by Gaetano Brundu.

July 4, 1992, New York, CUANDO. *A Day of Remembrance and Rejuvenation*, a community event organized by Jose Rodriguez, featuring William Parker, Jackson Krell, Lumi, Tony Feliciano, The War Hippies with Tom Corn, Matt Enger, Mark Enger, Santi Suaviro, Carol Blank, Lorenzo Pace, George Chaikin, Amir bey, Milene Bey, Charlotte Richardson, Michael Fitzgerald, Audrey Dolan, Virginia Jiminez, Wess Power, Ravi Blank, Nancy Wells, Tom Corn, Linda Hiwot, Santi Suaviro, David Cook, Rolando Politi, Ik-Joon Kang, Hamlet Zurita, Kazuko, Eileen Doster, Wolf, Radha Blank, Rasheed, Kelly B. Darr, Kali Fasteau, Siobhan Duffy, Celestino Boane, Ellie Ali, Mark Enger, Nilda Cortez, Drew Curtis, Hayato, El-Seleum, Al-Ibrahim, Derek Lester, Guevara Soliman, Vermon Bigman, Eve Hennessy.

September 26-November, 1992, Cagliari, Plexus International Storage. *Multiples of Black*, an art installation by Antonello Dessi. Opening with dance performance by Carolina Dessi.

October 9-11, 1992, Carloforte, Sardinia, Cinema Mutua. *Columbus Reconciliation Forum on "The Well Being in the XXI Century."*

October 11, 1992, Sardinia, Carloforte, Auditorium. *Reconciliation Route Correction: The Voyage of Elisabeth*, a music performance by Giancarlo Schiaffini, art installations by Gabriella Locci and Maria Grazia Medda.

October 12, 1992, Cagliari, Plexus International Storage. *Plexus Storage Calls NYC*, performances by Lorenzo Pace with Patricia Parker Nicholson, and George Chaikin with Sandro Dernini.

December 10, 1992, New York, City Hall. *Human Right Day*, a round table organized by the Commissioner Dennis de Leon.

December 10, 1992, New York, Auditorium Barney Building, New York University. *The Deconstruction of a PLEXUS-CUANDO Event, Purgatorio Show 1992, The Voyage of the Elisabeth: In Order to Survive Il Viaggio del Serpente*, a performance by William Parker, Patricia Nicholson Parker, Alfa Diallo, Jose Rodriguez, Barnaby Ruhe, Lorenzo Pace, George Chaikin, David Ecker, Sandro Dernini, George Chaikin, Okechukwu Odita, Georgetta Stonefish.

December 23, 1992, Cagliari, Bookstore Dattena. *Free Free Freedom*, an art installation by Corrado Pani, Sara Scalas, Sabina Tatti.

May, 1993, New York, USA Club. *The Repatriation of a Plexus Campbell Soup Can in the Artworld*, a performance by Richard Heisler, Sandro Dernini, José Rodriguez.

June 16, 1993, New York, Auditorium Barney Building, New York University. *Cultural Navigation and Community: Art, Reconciliation and Well Being*, a round table, with Dennis De Leon, Antonio Pagano, David Ecker, Jose Rodriguez, Tony Feliciano, Sandro Dernini

July 1, 1993, New York, Nuyorican Poets Café. *The Repatriation of Art into the Community*, a performance by Sandro Dernini.

July 1-30, 1993, New York, Rosenberg Gallery, New York University. *The Nuraghic Voyage of the Elisabeth*, an art installation by Sandro Dernini.

October 11, 1993, New York, The Cooper Union. *Plexus Black Box: Art & Science*, an art and science presentation by Guido Pegna, George Chaikin, Franco Meloni, Sandro Dernini.

October 12, 1993, New York, Saint John The Divine Cathedral. *Columbus Day: Marconi Columbus Open Call for Reconciliation, Art, and Well Being*, in preparation of the Second International Forum on the Well Being in the XXI Century, an art installation by Andrea Portas, Anna Saba, Antonello Dessi, Giovanna Caltagirone, Rolando Politi, Andrea Grassi, Ivan Dalla Tana, Franco Meloni, Georgetta Stonefish; performance by Miguel Algarin, Lorenzo Pace, Patricia Nicholson Parker, Guido Pegna, Joanee Freedom, Maria Pia Marsala, Sandro Dernini, Rodolfo Maria Dernini.

October 13, 1993, New York, Auditorium Barney Building, New York University. *The Voyage of the Elisabeth*, a round table with Francesco Corongiu, Franco Meloni, David Ecker, Sandro Dernini, Earl S. Davis, Jose Rodriguez.

October 13, 1993, New York, Nuyorican Poets Cafe. *The Repatriation of Art Into the Community*, a performance by Patricia Parker, Jose Rodriguez, Lois Griffith, Sandro Dernini, with Anna Saba, Antonello Dessi, Giovanna Caltagirone, Franco Meloni, Guido Pegna, David Boyle, Annamaria Janin, Alesandra Menesini, Andrea Portas, Rolando Politi.

November 3-15, 1993, New York, Rosenberg Gallery, New York University. *A Contract to Be Negotiated, Columbus Egg: The Living Plexus Black Box of "The Voyage of the Elisabeth,"* two weeks of art events curated by Frank Pio and Sandro Dernini for the NYU phenomenology in art's course by David Ecker, with discussions, performances and art works by John Torreano, Eve Vaterlaus, George Chaikin, Maria Pia Marsala, Alfa Diallo, Jose Rodriguez, David Boyle, Patricia Parker Nicholson, Ray Kelly, Eddie Birchmore, Lorenzo Pace, Ivan Dalla Tana, Ciro Ciriaco, Micaela Serino, Andrea Grassi.

June 6-19, 1994, Cagliari, Cittadella dei Musei. *Art and Science Today: The Role of Imagination*, a week of events, organized by the Interdepartmental Well Being Center and curated by Annamaria Janin, with roundtables, performances and artworks, featuring Gillo Dorfles, Michele Emmer, Tonino Casula, Franco Oppo, Lucio Saffaro, Ruggero Pierantoni, Pasquale Ristretta, Giovanni Lilliu, Francesco Corongiu, Franco Meloni, Antonello Saba, Mario Pani, Giovanni Battista Zurru, Augusto Rinaldi, Bruno Anatra, Giulio Angioni, Piero Marongiu, Pippo Puggioni, Gianni Licheri, Carlo Muntoni, Francesco Aymerich, Luigi Concas, Guido Pegna, Lucio Garau, Corrado Pani, Sara Scalas, Sabina Tatti, Stanley Medeja, David Ecker, Michele Bartonomen, Raimondo De Muro, Paola Bitti, Sandro Dernini, Carlo Antonio Borghi, Antonio Caboni, Gaetano Brundu, Antonello Dessi, Randi Hansen, Gabriella Locci, Maria Grazia Medda, Andrea Portas, Anna Saba, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, David Boyle, Maria Pia Marsala, Alessandra Menesini.

December, 1994, Cagliari, TimeArt, Pirri. *SOS Sardegna Open Space*, a week art program organized by Andrea Portas with Rolando Politi, with exhibitions, presentations and performances organized by Jorge Luis Rodriguez, Andrew Castrucci, Rolando Politi, Sandro Dernini.

September 21, 1995, Cagliari, Harbour. *The Marconi Open Call of Cagliari for the Well Being in the XXI Century*, a scientific event on board the Elisabeth boat by Guido Pegna.

October 12, 1995, Cagliari, University of Cagliari. *Navigating Global Cultures: Marconi Open Call*, an interactive experimental on-line event made by Guido Pegna and George Chaikin, connecting New York University and The Cooper Union in New York, with presentations by Salvatore Naitza, Francesco Corongiu, Franco Meloni, Sandro Dernini.

October 15, 1995, S. Antioco, Sardinia, Harbour. *The Voyage of the Elisabeth: The Ark of the Well Being*, an art performance from the Elisabeth boat made by Piero Cianflone, with presentation by Pippo Puggioni, Alberto Soi, Sandro Dernini.

December 15-17, 1995, Cagliari, University of Cagliari. *Navigating Global Cultures: Strategies for the Well Being in the XXI Century*, Second International Well Being and Reconciliation Forum, organized by the Interdepartmental Well Being Center, with the participation of Giovanni Lilliu, Carlo De Marco, Carlo Cannella, Giuseppe Rotilio, Aldo Landi, Indira Chakravarti, Francesco Corongiu, Enrico Casadei, Giovanni Panatta, David Ecker, Mico Licastro, George Chaikin, Miguel Algarin, Arturo Lindsay, Glauco Benigni, Sandro Dernini, Franco Meloni, Bruno Anatra, Pippo Puggioni, Augusto Rinaldi, Tito Orrù, Giancarlo Nonnoi.

March 20, 1996, Atlanta, Spelman College, Giles Hall. *The History of Plexus: An International Artist Movement*, an art presentation organized by Arturo Lindsay with speaker Sandro Dernini.

May 13, 1996, Dakar, Trois BaoBab Gallery. *Plexus at Dak'Art 96*, an art presentation and installation organized by Plexus Dakar with Youssouph Baro, Zulu MBaye, Sandro Dernini, Kre MBaye, Kadher Diop, Assane MBaye.

November 13-20, 1996, Rome, Roof Garden of Palazzo delle Esposizioni. *From Welfare to Well Being: Eating Art, Get the Best From Your Food, Food for All*, a special art event on the occasion of the FAO World Food Summit, organized by Sandro Dernini and Mico Licastro, featuring: Giancarlo Schiaffini, Alvin Curran, Renato Manbor, Aldo Braibanti, Giampaolo Berto, Baldo Deodato, Leonardo Carrano,

Amerigo Schiavo, Enrica Scalari, Adriano Mordenti, Bruno Canova, Angelo Falciano, Vito Miroealli, Reinhard Pflingst, Tomoko Jindo, June Di Schino, Leonora Adams, Pilar Aguirre, Miguel Algarin, Minou Amirsoleimani, Mauricio Bentes, Randa Berouti, Marcello Brizzi, William Canty, Gino Casavecchia, Piero Cianflone, Quaselle Curtis, Carlo Cusatelli, Eleonora del Brocco, Elisabetta Diamanti, Andrea di Giacomo, Baldo Diadato, David Ecker, Venera Finocchiaro, Giorgio Fiume, Nicola Froggio Francica, Volker Klein, Arturo Lindsay, Andrea Maggiar, Roberto Marino, Raffaello Paiella, Mario Palmieri, Mario Paoletti, Patrizia Pinori, Gabriella Porpora, Micaela Serino, Vadoody Soheila, Vittorio Terracina, Ilir Zefi, Maria Pia Marsala, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Marco Fabiano, Valerio Immi, Fabiana Iacolucci, Sabrina Ceccobelli, Franco Lao-Tan, Carlo Bordini, Tony Spiller, Giuseppe Aliberti, Marco Anelli, Emilio Cafiero, Vincenzo Ceccato, Giò Cuccus, Dario Cubani, Iginio De Luca, Antonio De Pietro, Ferdinando Fedele, Elmerindo Fiore, Sabrina Foschini, Giorgio Galli, Sebastiano Guerrera, Enco L'Acqua, Enzo Lisi, Gianni Mantovani, Claudio Marini, Fabio Masatti, Francesco Melone, Michelangelo Penso, Michele Peri, Luca Piovaccari, Graziano Pompili, Paolo Radi, Maurizio Pio Rocchi, Fausto Roma, Massimo Rossetti, Juan Segua, Claudio Spoletini, Franco Ule, Mario Velocci, Daniele Mezzani, Gianfranco Biancofiore, Guido Confini, Livia Bortolini, Massimiliano Ciccotti, Mariateresa Ciammaruconi, Davide Colantoni, Nicoletta Procella, Alessandro D'Agostini, Pierluca Dal Canto, Sandro Disegni, Federico Falcioni, Rossella Fusco, Francesco Graco, Maria Jatosti, Daniele Leoni, Marco Mancini, Myriam Marino, Stefano Monteforte, Giorgio Nisini, Bruno Mattia Pascal, Orazio Poli, Alessio Porcaccia, Biagio Propato, Rossella Pugliese, Maria C. Raieta, Giampiero Ricci, Lidia Rivello, Michela Rizzo, Sergio Saritzu, Monica Savoia, Eugenia Serafini, Mauro Simonetti, Federica Terrenzio, Davide Vescia.

July 23-25, 1997, Rome, Festa dei Noantri. *Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte*, an art event organized by the Metateatro, with performances and installations by Alvin Curran, Giancarlo Schiaffini, Eugenio Colombo, Michele Innacone, Adriano Mordenti with his Hadash Klezmer Orchestra, Pippo di Marca, Silvana Mariniello, Khadidja Sow, Mory Thioune, Ndeye Boury Gadiaga, Baldo Deodato, Dario Petino, Giancarla Ceppi, Marina Laurenti, Marcello Brizzi, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Micaela Serino, Giorgio Fiume, Eleonora del Brocco, Sandro Dernini, Valerio Immi, Anna Paola Bonanni, Paola Muzzi.

October 16, 1997, Sidney, Culture Lab. *Eating Art*, an art installation and performance, on the occasion of the World Food Day, organized by Culture Lab and coordinated by Willem Brugman.

October 16, 1997, Dakar, School de Ceur de Saint Mairie. *Eating Art*, an art and food education event, on the occasion of the World Food Day, organized by Plexus Dakar, with Anna Bathily, Youssouph Baro, Kader Diop, Assane MBaye.

September 25-27, 1998, Carloforte, Teatro Cavallera, Sardinia. *From Welfare to Well Being in the XXI Century: Rights, Duties and New Values in the Next Millennium. Get the Best from Your Food*, 3° International Well Being Reconciliation Symposium, organized by the Interdepartmental Well Being Center of the University of Cagliari, with Carlo De Marco, Carlo Cannella, Bill Clay, Francesco Corongiu, Nino Battistini, Aldo Landi, Clara Abatecola, Mico Licastro, Eugene Nardelli, Youssouph Baro, Urban Diagne, James Oddhiambo, Indira Chakravarty, David Ecker, Okechukwu Odita, Franco Meloni. Plexus International staged the art multimedia installation *The Ark of the Well Being*, with Guido and Mattia Pegna, Andrea Mameli, Alessandra Menesini, Jose Rodriguez, Arturo Lindsay, George Chaikin, Giancarlo Schiaffini,

Paolo Maltese, Willem Brugman, Paola Muzzi, David Boyle, Michel Bartonomen, Fabrizio Bertuccioli.

November 26-28, 1999, Cagliari, University of Cagliari. *Toward A Food Security for All*, 4° International Well Being Reconciliation Symposium, organized by the Interdepartmental Well Being Center of the University of Cagliari, with Sandro Dernini, Carlo De Marco, Carlo Cannella, John Lupien, Bill Clay, Francesco Corongiu, Nino Battistini, Aldo Landi, Clara Abatecola, Mico Licastro, David Ecker, Okechukwu Odita, Franco Meloni. Plexus International staged the art multimedia installation *The Ark of the Well Being*, with Guido and Mattia Pegna, Andrea Mameli, Alessandra Menesini, George Chaikin.

November 14, 2000, Rome, San Michele a Ripa. *Voyage Through the Door of No Return*, a Plexus art presentation with Achille Bonito Oliva, Dante Balboni, Pietro Monni, Karim Diuff, Katia Miranda-Saleme, Glauco Benigni, Sandro Dernini.

December 10, 2000, Goree, Dakar, House of the Slaves. *The Return of the Ancestral Slave*, an art performance by Arturo Lindsay with Assane MBaye and Youssouph Traore.

July, 2001, Rome, Metateatro. Plexus International organized *In Order to Survive : An Other World is Possible*, an art event to protest against the G8 in Genoa.

November, 2001, Rome, Campo dei Fiori, and Yellow Rock in Australia. *Buy Nothing Day*, an art action against consumism organized by Plexus International and Culture Lab.

June, 2002, Medina, Dakar, Old City Hall. *The Triangle of Art*, a community biennial art event, within the section DakArtOff of the Biennial of Contemporary African Art, organized by Assane Mbaye and Gallo Thiam with Omar Ndiaye, Souleymane Pouye, Kre Mbaye, Youssouph Traore, Adama Ndyaye, Awa Mbaye, Fatoumata Coulibaly, Groupe Black Thioussan de la Medina, Petit Alain Xosluman Groupe, Sandro Dernini, Micaela Serino, Silvana Maraniello, Alberto Soi, Eraldo Ridi, Luisa Di Gaetano, Simona Lanzoni, Andrea Corti, Michel Pellaton, Silvia Pellegrini, Egidio Grasso, Tore Soi.

November, 2002, Yellow Rock, Australia. *Buy Nothing Day*, an art action organized by Culture Lab with Willem Brugman, Catherine Hassall, Graham Bird, John Brisbin.

December 10, 2002, Rome, Outside the Colosseum. *The Alphabet of Peace*, an art happening against the war, with Gianpaolo Berto, Massimo Bagarotto, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Eleonora del Brocco, Pilar Castel, Egisto Catalani, Annamaria Chio, Stefano Cossu, Giovanna Dalla Chiesa, Franca D'Angelo, Sandro Dernini, Karen Elliot, Roberto Federici, Marco Fioramanti, Giorgio Fiume, Joseph Fontano, Melo Franchina, Nato Frascà, Valerio Immi, Valentina Macrina, Silvana Mariniello, Maria Monti, Roberto Morellini, Vito Palladino, Lorenzo Poli, Emanuele Profumi, Ilario Rezzi, Micaela Serino, Ernesto Stalkern.

January 18, 2003, Rome, Dromo Social Space. *Cave Canem*, in an art event with Massimo Bagarotto, Gian Paolo Berto, Carlo Antonio Borghi, Pilar Castel, Egisto Catalani, Eleonora del Brocco, Sandro Dernini, Valerio Immi, Silvana Mariniello, Luisa Mazzullo, Maria Monti, Roberto M. Federici, Giorgio Fiume, Raffaello Paiella, Micaela Serino, Alberto Soi.

May 29-June 7, 2004, Medina, Dakar, Old City Hall. 2° *Triangle of Art Festival*, within the section DakArtOff of the Biennial of Contemporary African Art, organized by Assane MBaye, Gallo Thiam and Sandro Dernini, with the participation of Mamadou Kaly Niang, Kre Mbaye, Youssouph Traoré, Seni MBaye, El Hadji Cheikh MBaye, Jérôme Dos Santos, Morin Diop, Magoné Ndiaye, Daouda Ndoeye, Awa Mbaye, Fatoumata Coulibaly, Moussa Kandji, Laye Sy, Cissé Dia, Pape Moussa, Moussa Kandji, Abdou Souleye Diakhaté, Mapathé Sow, Alioune Coulibaly, Hamidou Sall dit Sall Amewa, Alioune Badara Fall dit Prof, Alain Coulibaly, Groupe Beug Fallou, Groupes Etoile Bi Rappeur de la Médina, Ballet Sangomar Maissa Thioub, Ababacar MBaye LY. Plexus International staged *Erosions and Renaissance Show*, with virtual artworks by Luisa Mazzullo, Micaela Serino, Eleonora del Brocco, Valerio Immi, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Giorgio Fiume, Roberto Federici, Ernesto Stalkern, Monica Lisi, Frank Shifreen, Barnaby Ruhe, George Chaikin, Rolando Politi, Alfa Diallo, José Rodríguez, Arturo Lindsay, David Boyle, Miguel Algarin, Eve Vaterlaus, Lucia Pizzani, Zach Pine, Willem Brugman, Catherine Hassall, Steve Lalor, Graham King, John Brisbin, Juno Gemes, Geoff Buchan, Trudi Latour, Stuart Vaskass, Susanna Kalk, John Archer.

November 29-December 5, 2004, Ballarat, Australia, Grainery Lane Theatre Gallery. *Erosions and Renaissance Show Act 2*, on the occasion of the *Eureka Rising Festival*, organized by Culture Lab with Willem Brugman, Catherine Hassall and Graham Bird and virtual artworks by Geoff Buchan, Juno Gemes, Graham Bird, John Archer, Trudy Latour, Stacey Johnston, John Brisbin, Dale Fort, Alejandro Thornton, Graeme Dunstan, John Peace, Lady Boddha Gwen, Frame and Josh, Santithitho, Nicolas Moll, Shane Van den Acker, Khail Edgar Jureidini, Stuart Vaskess, Suzanne Kalk, Melissa Proposch, Steve Proposch, Chrissy Mildren, Karen Heap, Alison Thomson, Desley Beechy, Alice Mills, Fraser MacKay, Joanne Davis, Larry Apendale, Susan Hawthorne, Caroline Taylor, Michelle van Gerrevink, Jim McIlroy, David Fred, Susan Truss, Arleen Schloss, George Chaikin, Zach Pine, Lynne Kanter, Rolando Politi, Hanne H7L Lauridsen, Arturo Lindsay, Joanne Freedom, Garrick Beck and Gerald Damiano, Luisa Mazzullo, Micaela Serino, Monica Lisi, Beatrice Bolletta, Raffaello Paiella, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Sandro Dernini, Adamo Verena, Eleonora del Brocco, Simona Sarti, Susan Dutton, Gian Pietro Carrozza, Alberto Soi, Ivan Dalla Tana, Carlo Antonio Borghi, Giampaolo De Filippi, Giorgio Viva, Paivi Aala, Carlo Culatelli, Giovanna Gandini, Cosetta Mastrogostino, Pilar Castel, Roberto Pisello, Stefano Nuti, Gianni Villella, Kré Mbaye, Jérôme Dos Santos, Seni MBaye, Titi Ray, Badara Diop dit Badau, Assane Gningue, Ibou Dos Santos, Alain Coulibaly, Alioune Badara Fall dit Prof, Tamsir Gueye, Fadel Lo, Djibi Diop, Luis Gomis, Secka, Mamadou Dione, Makhou Pouye, Babacar Sadikh Traorè, Mayoro, Seynabou Sakho, Allohou De Babacar, Assane MBaye, Alite Thijsen, Reta Reinl, Brigitte Hoppstock-Neufahrn, Dani Diaz, Angela Ibanez, Paloma Negra, Viviana Macías, Antonio Damarko, Niz Jabour.

May 28, 2005, Lecce, Italy, Academy of Fine Arts. *Erosions and Renaissance Show Act 3, Part 1*, an art event organized by Raggio Verde Edition and curated by Monica Lisi with an art exhibition by Paivi Aala, Renato Centonze, Nico Carone, Ugo De Filippi, Giampaolo De Filippi, Pietro Liaci, Antonio Mazzotta, Maurizio Muscettola, Ilaria De Blasi, Pasquale Urso, Giorgio Viva, Enza Patera, films screenings by Giuliano Capani and Piero Cannizzaro, and virtual artworks by Luisa Mazzullo, Rolando Politi, Beatrice Bolletta, Anna Saba, Eva Rachele Grassi, Simona Sarti, Morin Diop, Marco Fioramanti, Micaela Serino, Kre MBaye, Roberto M. Federici, Vittorio Terracina, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Serena Colucci, Antonello Dessi, Angelo Ermanno Senatore, Sandro Dernini, Badou, Jerome Dos Santos, Seni MBaye, Seynabou Sakho, Cheikh Diop, Lassana Gassama, Moussa NDiaye, Valerio Immi, Carlo Antonio

Borghgi, Zach Pine, Gianni Felle, Djibi Diop, Angela Carotenuto, Louis Gomis, Joe Ouakam, Maurizio Cesarini, Mamadou Dione, Maria Lucia Pugliese, Viviana Macias, Angela Ibanez.

October 1, 2005, Rome, National Academy of Dance. *Eating Art*, an art event organized by the Institute of Food Science of the University of Rome "La Sapienza", within the 3rd EuroMed Forum on Food Cultures; directed by Joseph Fontano, featuring performances and artworks by Luca Di Paolo, Maria Grazia Lanzafame, Hadassan Berry, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Carlo Antonio Borghi, Marcello Brizzi, Bruno Canova, Eleonora Del Brocco, Nino De Luca, Antonello Dessi, Angelo Falciano, Roberto Maria Federici, Franco Ferrari, Venera Finocchiaro, Marco Fioramanti, Giorgio Fiume, Nicola Foggio Francica, Valerio Immi, Volker Klein, Monica Lisi, Ferdinando Lopez, Roberto Marino, Franco Massimo, Luisa Mazzullo, Vito Miroballi, Raffaello Paiella, PierPaolo Pianigiani, Reinhardt Pfungst, Yoschinori Sakai, Anna Saba, Lillo Santoro, Simona Sarti, Fabrizio Serangeli, Micaela Serino. It was staged *Erosions and Renaissance Show Act 3 Part 2*, with virtual artworks by Viviana Macias, Daniel Diaz, Paola Culiarsi, Hamidou Sall dit Sall Amewa, Hadassah Berry, Michele Costantini, Julianna Joos, Beatrice Bolletta, Maurizio Cesarini, Rolando Politi, Kerstin Lichblau, Raffaello Paiella, Maria Elisabetta Piu, Graciela Ciampini, Matilde Algamiz, Paulo and Fernando Zornitta, Vera Milsztain, Frank Pio, Dalit Sharon, Nava Koresh, Rahul Gajjar, Angela Ibanez, Eve Vaterlaus, Valere Oisteanu, Garrick Beck Willem Brugman, Simona Sarti, Maria Forleo.

December 10, 2005, New York, S.Mark Church. *Erosions and Renaissance Show Act 4 Part 1*, a community art event, on the occasion of Human Right Day and of the 100th anniversary of Albert Einstein's relativity, organized by Rolando Politi with Sandro Dernini, featuring Father Frank Morales, George Stonefish, Joanee Freedom, Amoeba Technology, Arleen Schloss, Miguel Algarin, Alfa Diallo, Valery Oistenau, Dee Pop, Vittorio Terracina, Patricia Geri Russell, Eveleena Dann, Erin Kelly, Kirk Peterkin, Lo Galluccio, Lou Rossi, Will Di Martino, Uke and Isabella Jackson, Willoughby Sharp, George Chaikin, Franco Meloni, Anna Saba, Ray Kelly, Lorenzo Pace, Patricia Nicholson Parker, William Parker, Arturo Lindsay, Lynne Kanter, David Boyle, Jose Rodriguez, Eve Vaterlaus, Barnaby Ruhe, Jim C, Frank Shifreen, Anita Steckel, Rodolfo and Salvatore Dernini. Virtual artworks by Errica Tramcere, Fant Anaf, Viviana Macias, Monica Lisi, Roberta Venanzi, Elisabetta Piu, Marco Fioramanti, Silvina Romano, Simona Sarti, Beatrice Bolletta, Raffaello Paiella, Angela Ibanez, Rolando Politi.

March 8, 2006, Barcelona, Alimentaria Fair, VI International Congress on the Mediterranean Diet. *Erosions and Renaissance Show Act 4 Part 2*, an art installation, on the occasion World Women Day, by Sandro Dernini and Anna Saba. Virtual art works by Rolando Politi, Viviana Macias, Giovanna Gandini, Carlo Antonio Borghi, Matilde Algamiz, Maria Ibanez, Elisabetta Piu, Eleonora del Brocco, Alberto Soi, Simona Sarti.

March 8, 2006, Rome, Teatro il Vascello. *Erosions and Renaissance Show Act 4 Part 2*, an art event, on the occasion World Women Day, by Micaela Serino and Luisa Mazzullo with Luisa Morgantini, Nadia Cervoni, Silvana Mariniello, Caterina Merlino.

May 9, 2006, Rome, Solea Club. *Nutrire l'Arte: Gagarin Asta*, a fundraising art auction organized by Mario Giacotti, Micaela Serino and Sandro Dernini, featuring Glauco Benigni, Selen Milcot Project, Roberto Palermo, and artworks by Kre MBaye,

Seni MBaye, Morin Diop, Alioune Badara Fall dit Prof, Hamidou Sall dit Sall Amewa, Alain Coulibaly, Micaela Serino, Luisa Mazzullo, video recording by Gabriel Benigni.

May 11, 2006, Cagliari, Pietro Zambelli Garage. *Nutrire l'Arte: Gagarin Asta*, a fundraising art auction organized by Pietro Zambelli, Carlo Antonio Borghi and Sandro Dernini, with artworks by Kre MBaye, Seni MBaye, Alain Coulibaly, Alioune Badara Fall dit Prof, Morin Diop, Hamidou Sall dit Sall Amewa.

May 19-21, 2006, Medina, Dakar, Old City Hall. *3^oTriangle of Art Festival*, within the section DakArtOff of the Biennial of Contemporary African Art, organized by COSEFIT and Plexus International Forum Onlus in collaboration with ADEME and International Sports and Entertainment Connection, featuring Amadou Niang, Sandro Dernini, Assane Mbaye, Kre MBaye, Youssouf Traorè, Ibrahima Sar, Seni MBaye, Mangoné NDiaye, Hamidou Sall dit Sall Amewa, El Hadji Cheikh Mbaye, Gallo Thiam, Fatoumata Coulibaly, Galerie Serigne Fallou de Madame Awa MBaye, Alain Coulibaly, Kadher Diop, Morin Diop, Jerome Dos Santos, Pape Diop, Babacar Traoré, Omar NDiaye, Souleymane Pouye, Khatib Faye et son groupe, Ndeye Kassé, Groupe Assico Médina, Beug Fallou, Batip Faye et son groupe, Sing Sing Rythme, Dj Moiza, Etoile bi de Médina, Fafadi, 5ème Underground, One-Bi, ATI (Eyti Ey), Rebe Deugue, Cartel Flow, Victim's, KTD, Sen Koumpe, Kamikaze, Sunu Système, Kid Killer, Médina Afro, Zaire Ak Batine, Bisbi Clean, Def Cat, Indice, Fata, Ben Rakim, 10000 Problèmes. It was staged *Erosions and Renaissance Show Act 5 Part 2*, an art installation made by Sandro Dernini.

June 27-29, 2006, Cagliari, Galleria Capitol Arte Contemporanea. *Nutrire l'Arte*, a fundraising art auction organized by Carlo Antonio Borghi with artworks by Kre MBaye, Seni MBaye, Morin Diop, Alain Coulibaly, Awa MBaye, Fatoumata Coulibaly.

July 21, 2006, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, House of Columbus. *Erosions and Renaissance Show Act 5 Part 2*, a fundraising art exhibition of artworks by Kre MBaye, Seny MBaye, Morin Diop, and children drawings from the Medina of Dakar, within the training seminar *Advancement on Nutrition and Obesity* by the Investigation Group on Nutrition of the University of Las Palmas, made collaboration with Nutricion sin Fronteras.

November 24-25, 2006, Sassari, Padiglione Tavolara. *Erosions and Renaissance Show Act 6*, an installation by Sandro Dernini with art works by Carlo Antonio Borghi, Seni MBaye, Kre MBaye, Morin Diop, Gaetano Brundu, Silvio Betti, Micaela Serino, Luisa Mazzullo, on the occasion of World Food Day, within the seminar *L'Identità Mangiata* organized by the Commissioner of Social Affairs of the City of Sassari. Exhibition on Plexus Virtual Gallery, www.plexusforum.net, of digital artworks by Beatrice Bolletta, Giosue Loj, Roberto Rey, Raffaello Paiella, Nicholas Bergery, Luisa Mazzullo, Ray Kelly, Gabriella Viana, Angela Ibanez, Simona Sarti, Elisabetta Piu, Rossana Luisetti, Archivo Vivo, Carlo Antonio Borghi, Zach Pine.

A BIOGRAPHIC NOTE

Sandro Dernini, a former biochemist researcher, has focused his interest on multicultural interdisciplinary exchanges between science and art.

Born in 1949, in Cagliari, Sardinia, he received in 1974 a Doctorate in Biology from the University of Cagliari. In New York, in 1997, he completed his Ph.D. in Art Education at the New York University.

Since 1982, Sandro Dernini has participated in the development of Plexus, an international community-based art experience, realizing numerous interactive experimental art & science events and community-based art projects in Dakar, Rome, Sardinia, New York, and Blue Mountains in Australia. He is also the chairman of Plexus International Forum Onlus, a non profit organization, established in Italy, in 1999, to assist Plexus International in its efforts, with particular regard toward *Art for Food – Food for Art*, a sustainable development community-based project in the Medina of Dakar.

Currently, he is the coordinator of the EuroMediterranean Forum on Food Cultures, based in Rome, for which has organized three International Conferences with the participation of experts from all Mediterranean countries. He is member of the International Scientific Committee of Nutrition without Borders, of the International Scientific Board of the Foundation for the Advancement of the Mediterranean Diet in Barcelona, and of the Scientific Committee of the International Interuniversity Centre for Mediterranean Food Cultures Studies in Rome.

From 1974 to 1978, at the Biochemistry Institute of the University “La Sapienza,” as assistant of prof. Carlo De Marco, former dean of the School of Medicine, he conducted researches on qualitative and quantitative separations of sulphur and selenium amino acids. In the 70's, he became involved in the Italian League of Cultural Alternative Associations (L.I.A.C.A.) and co-founded Spazio A, the first multimedia performance space in Sardinia.

Moving in New York, in early 1980, he co-founded the Center for Contemporary Italian Culture of New York University and organized many Italian-American cultural events and programs. In 1982, he co-founded Plexus as a performance space in Chelsea, and in 1984, in the Lower East Side, the Shuttle Theatre.

From 1986 to 1989, at New York University, as graduate assistant of prof. Angiola Churchill, co-director of the International Center for Advanced Studies in Art (ICASA), he participated in the organization of several symposia: *The Dematerialization of Art*; *The Redefinition of Art in the Collision of the Post-Modern World*; *The Convergence of Art and Philosophy*; and *Art and Societies*. Then, until 1994, he served as graduate assistant of prof. David Ecker, chairman of the Art Education Program of the NYU Art and Art Professions Department.

In 1992, as coordinator of the 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium, he organized in the island of San Pietro, Sardinia, the First International Columbus Reconciliation Forum on the theme *The Well Being in the XXI Century*. Then, until 1999, he coordinated in Sardinia other three international symposia organized by the Interdepartmental Well Being Center of the University of Cagliari that, since 1994, he assisted in its establishment.

In 1996, in Rome, as coordinator of the Consortium for the Well Being in the XXI Century, on the occasion of the FAO World Food Summit, at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, he codirected the special event *From Welfare to Well Being: Eating Art, Get the Best from Your Food, Food for All*, in collaboration with the FAO Food and Nutrition Division.

From 2000-2002, in Rome, at the FAO Food and Nutrition Division, as consultant he developed the guidelines of the FAO Network of the Centres of Excellence on Food Quality, Safety and Nutrition. From 2001-2002, in Rome, he coordinated the Italian Committee of the international educational initiative *Feeding Minds–Fighting Hunger*, promoted by FAO, UNESCO and World Bank.

From 2000-2006, at the Institute of Food Science of the University of Rome “La Sapienza,” as consultant he developed several nutrition education initiatives.

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