CHAPTER I

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Plexus started its activities in 1982, in the Chelsea neighborhood 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. Over a period of fourteen years Plexus evolved to its present status as an international collaborative effort with the intention of bridging the gap between the community and the academy. The notion of well-being emerged as the link between art and the community. Plexus since its beginning 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.

In its events Plexus encouraged, among all participants, face to face dialogue and creative and critical interaction. It continues to do so today. In Plexus events, artists, scientists, and audience, representing various cultures and ideologies, traversing separations of language, discipline, place, and individual differences, managed to create a complex multicultural art environment, intentionally bridging the gap between the community and the academy. Plexus events, involving on some occasions hundreds of artists and scientists, coming from different parts of the world, were fully financed by the participants themselves, without grants or market support.

During its years of activity, from 1982 to the present, Plexus has evolved a framework for global art projects moving into a multilateral information network, and possibly contributing to the development of an art movement expressly appropriate for a multicultural international complex society. But it would be difficult to label Plexus or group activities under existing art categories, especially because Plexus members intentionally resisted definitions.

In order to deal with such a complex series of events, the researcher identified "Plexus Black Box" as the subject of this study, because it encompassed all the events. "Plexus Black Box" was conceived in 1989 in Rome by the participants of the event 1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte. The idea was metaphorically to "freeze" Plexus and its activities within a "black box," for the need of the historical survival of the movement, in order to be preserved for art history.

"Plexus Black Box" materially consists of records and relics of Plexus history and performances. Many records consist of compiled images made as frames of reference or "quotes" of other records. Over the years Plexus events have built one upon the other. Each event takes place in its own present but it is made up of past concepts and activities while it projects its own various parts into the future activities of Plexus.

 "Plexus Black Box" is designed as an international travelling event, joined by local and international communities of artists and scientists. The project under study is a community-based art project, situating art in an expanded community and relating to broader heterogeneous multicultural environments.

"Plexus Black Box" encompasses an unending story of attempts made to build bridges with institutions not always ready for it. "Plexus Black Box" is a conscious act of recall of the struggle of the artists in the community, who are

running ahead toward their own future. While the study is about the past and is thus historical, it is also about the future and thus hermeneutical. In the words of Heidegger:

> 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].

By "freezing" Plexus within a conceptual black box, they are in effect defending their own, individual and collective, artistic and cultural identities, and the cultural survival of the group. Through documentation, the Plexus concepts, people and events are linked together. Therefore the nature of Plexus and in particular of "Plexus Black Box" is like a chain, 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.

Statement of the Problem

Because the researcher was part of the group which founded Plexus and is still an active participant of it, 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 evidence publicly accessible. Thus the supposed methodological problem is resolved by having "insider" accounts of events intersubjectively validated as a constituent of the ongoing art project under study.

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[1] Martin Heidegger, The Concept of Time, trans. William McNeill, (Cambridge: Balckwell, 1992) 14E.

The researcher conducted a hermeneutical multicultural investigation of the primary sources of the study as "insiders" views of this ongoing art project, in order to investigate how in a critical aesthetic discourse they were related. The researcher approaches the task through a field survey of all existing and available Plexus sources which he knew by his "stock of knowledge at hand" as it was pointed out by Alfred Schutz.[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 source was people. As an "insider" of the project, he applied the model of "the artist as researcher" proposed by David W. Ecker.[3] Only recently "insider" interpretations as emic accounts have begun to be recognized by the scientific community. This "insider" claim to validity is still contested as the current controversial debate between emics and etics points out.[4] The emic model, consistent with the model of the "artist as researcher" as well as with the community-based identity of the project under study, provides a unique "insider" understanding of "Plexus Black Box", supplied by members of that community in which the project is placed, as community-based art collaborative effort. Further, an etic method, reinforcing the "objectivity" of the study, is employed by the researcher by following a series of phenomenological hermeneutical strategies of interpretation as reported in the chapter III. Emic

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[2]Alfred Schutz, Reflections on the Problem of Relevance, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970) 66.

[3]David W. Ecker, "The Artist as Researcher: The Role of the Artist in Advancing Living Traditions in Art" First International Symposium on Living Traditions, eds. Boyd White and Lynn M. Hart (Montreal: McGill University, 1990).

[4]Thomas N. Headland, Kenneth L. Pike, Marvin Harris, eds, Emics and Etics. The Insider/ Outsider Debate, (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1990)

accounts are presented in Chapter IV, within a "bifurcated writing [5]" format. This "bifurcated" format is the "double writing" employed by Jacques Derrida. (See figure 1.)

The researcher's "double reading" format allows the "outsider" interpreter to perform at the same time his hermeneutical task of reading together the "insider" recollections of Plexus participants and, at their margins, the emic insights provided by the researcher.

Derrida uses this double writing as one of the models of his postmodern thought strategy to overturn the Western hierarchy of the text. The researcher applies it to offer to the "outsider" reader all emic understandings together with the researcher's own interpretation, placed at their margins, with no predominance of a single central point of interpretation.

In Chapter V, an "insider" overall narrative of the history of "Plexus Black Box" by "the artist as researcher" provides a reflexive historical account of the project under study. In the last Chapter VI, a multicultural aesthetic interpretation of "Plexus Black Box," is derived by the researcher from his "close reading" of all "insider" understandings presented in Chapters IV and V. His interpretation is made not as a conclusion, but as an open and critical aesthetic discourse which has 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 contemporary art, within and outside the postmodern debate.

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[5]Jacques Derrida, Positions, trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981) 42.

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Figure 1

Derrida Double Writing Example.

one must (know how to) destroy what one destroys.

Therefore, if they appear to remain marginal to some of the great texts in the history of philosophy, these ten writings *in fact* ask the question of the margin. 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 determined 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 (everything—"history," "politics," "economy," "sexuality," etc.—said not to be written in books: the worn-out expression with which we appear not to have finished stepping backward, in the most regressive argumentations and in the most apparently unforeseeable places); and also to recall that the *written* text of philosophy (this time in its books) overflows and cracks its meaning.

To philosophize *à corps perdu.*[13] How did Hegel understand that?

Can this text become the margin of a margin? Where has the body of the text gone when the margin is no longer a secondary virginity but an inexhaustible reserve, the stereographic activity of an entirely other ear?

through the canal of a wound narrow but deep enough to involve the innermost muscles; whether it is that of an artist from the opera, cut from the heart of the rock, or fashioned in the most supple steel if it is that of a singer, emerging from the moist earth of a hothouse or stretched out in breaking glass filament if that of one of the creatures more readily called *cantatrices* than *chanteuses* (even though *cantateurt* is an unknown species); or whether it is the most vulgar voice, issuing from the most insignificant being for the most insipid ballad or most trivial refrain, mysterious is the voice that sings, in relation to the voice that speaks.

The mystery—if

† *Cantatrice* has the sense of an opera singer, a diva (a hothouse, glass-breaking voice), while *chanteuse* is simply a female singer. There is no masculine form *cantateur* corresponding to *cantatrice*.

13. TN. See the second epigraph above for Hegel's use of the expression *à corps perdu.* It means impetuously, passionately.

From <u>Margins of Philosophy</u> by J. Derrida, page xxiii.

Delimitations of the Study

Because the project under study is an ongoing activity, the artist as researcher chose to conclude his inquiry with the event A Contract to be Negotiated, Columbus Egg: The Living Plexus Black Box of "The Voyage of the Elisabeth," which took place on November 12, 1993, at the Rosenberg Gallery of New York University. There through the packaging of the artifacts on exhibition relating to previous Plexus events was symbolically sealed in two containers, collectively named "Plexus Black Box." This "Box" provided a temporal closure.

Due to the large number of Plexus participants living in different parts of the world, the researcher delimited his field research to the collection and interpretation of recollections only of those identified from records and relics of the project sealed at the Rosenberg Gallery, and who participated in more than one event.

No attempt was made by the artist as researcher to make a formal analysis of the art works in this study.

Definitions

The following definitions will provide an initial grasp of 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]

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[6]Alfred Schutz, Reflections on the Problem of Relevance, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1970) 28.

Aesthetics: is a field of study which is understood to include all studies of the arts and related types of experience from a philosophic, scientific, or other theoretical standpoint, 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 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]

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

[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 (Newbury Park: Sage Pubblications, 1990) 130.

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.

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

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[10]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 (Newbury Park: Sage Pubblications, 1990) 130-131.

[11]Alfred Schutz. Reflections on the Problem of Relevance (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970) 25.

[12]Alfred Schutz. Reflections on the Problem of Relevance (New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1970) 36.
[13]
 David W. Ecker, notes, Summer Institute on the Living Traditions in Art, New York University , November 15, 1993.

[14] David W. Ecker, " Cultural Identity, Artistic Empowerment, and the Future of Art in the Schools," Design for Arts in Education January-February 1990: 15.

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 Study

Plexus has generated since 1982 numerous art events which are a significant but as yet an unexamined part of the contemporary history of art. Today there is no a comprehensive account of Plexus. More than 500 artists from all over the world have participated in this ongoing art project, yet there has been no scholarly examination of these art activities.

In times where in individual and cultural identification are of paramount concern to all ethnic groups and with small countries emerging after years of suppression to grasp the possibilities of global participation, this multicultural interpretative study seems of particular significance. In a multicultural environment, where different values and cultures 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 separations.

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[15] Barbara Myerhoff and Jay Ruby, Crack in the Mirror: Reflexive Perspectives in Anthropology (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982) 2.

[16] Alfred Schutz. Reflections on the Problem of Relevance (New Haven and London: Yale University Press. , 1970) 66.

"Plexus Black Box" is an example of an art form that reinforces 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 are of a very disparate nature, yet the thematic underlying structure accommodates them all.

By creating alternative channels of communication among cultural and ethnic groups, by bridging the academy and the community, connecting centers and margins, Plexus has provided a ground for individuals of different fields and cultures to make original contributions in the development of a 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. Plexus events have brought scientists, humanists, artists, and audience together in one place from all over the world, 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 of the activities of Plexus can assist in the creation of a new multicultural environment for learning in art education, as Angiola Churchill states in Art for Preadolescents:

> 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 (407).

The purpose of the project under study is to reinforce dialogue among individuals, separated communities of different cultures, classes, and genders, from different parts of the world, and create an improvement of the well-being of humankind, context-bound within the interdependent "fragile" and critical community-based environment in which each one of us lives and works. 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," see documents in the appendix D.

This study attempts to respond by a careful cultural and artistic interpretation of the emerging interest in the issue of cultural identity and multiculturalism through the "artist in the first person." This study clarifies how "the artist in the first person" was able 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 of the locations mentioned the activities developed according to the specific characteristics of the locations and the cultural aspects of that particular community. As a consequence the invention of new forms and ideas arose in the activities developed.

John Dewey claims in <u>Art As Experience</u> the interdependence of art and 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 (13).

Lucy Lippard in her Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America underlines the difficulty of making multicultural exchanges bridging center and margins:

> 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."... 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. (7)

Plexus events were created by artists and scientists interacting together and with the environment. They had in common the need to experiment with new forms of communication, able to traverse disciplines and cultures.

McFee and Degge in Art, Culture, and Environment: A Catalyst for Teaching raises the issue of the need of art and science interaction for a better understanding of the human environment:

> 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 tend 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 (322).

In response to this need, the project under study focuses on the need to increase interactive dialogue between artists and scientists in order to assist in bringing well-being and reconciliation to diverse communities.

Jonas Salk underlines this need to bring together artists and scientists in his The Next Evolutionary Step in the Ascent of Man in the Cosmos:

> 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? (238)

From the early 60's through the late 80's, artists as well as scientists have significantly challenged their perspectives about the nature and purpose of their artistic or scientific method.

A significant question, of course, has to do with the artistic identity of "Plexus Black Box," the extent to which its related records can be considered works of art, and the emergence of a Plexus art as an art form. Various emic responses to this question are presented in chapter IV. This study should serve to elucidate and to bring better understanding to the artistic processes which have characterized "Plexus Black Box."

The structure and concepts of "Plexus Black Box" is analysed as an emerging form of art expression, one which is more democratic and appropriate for a multicultural art world, one in which voices not usually heard, at the margins of the Western modern aesthetic theories, now have an opportunity to speak. The main characteristic of "Plexus Black Box" is that it is like an accumulation of ideas on a theme created in communities about subjects of interest to them, with materials of all kinds that the artist claims appropriate for her/his expression and where the ordinary standards of "modernism" or any other "ism", claimed significant by the established art world, are not taken into consideration. As a result there is a crossing of the traditional boundaries of criticism, 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." While in the 60's and in the 70's artists chose to break art making conventions, the artists of Plexus in the 80's were also turning their backs on traditional art expression. Not only was their art not traditional, but also not saleable and outside the realms of museums, galleries and other conventional and commercial institutions. Many events of Plexus took place in communities or at historic sites where social crimes had been perpetuated. There the 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. In recognition of its efforts the minister of culture of Senegal in a letter to the researcher states:

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

The community-based art project under study underlines 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. Suzi Gablick foresees this new kind of model of artistic participation, on which Plexus is formulated, in her The Reenchantment of Art :

> 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 (27).

Method

The researcher employed the model of "the artist as researcher" as it was presented by Ecker in "The Artist as Researcher: The Role of the Artist in Advancing Living Traditions in Art," and in particular as it was articulated during his graduate courses and seminars at New York University on "Living Traditions in Art." The first sequences of procedural steps outlined by the model are: 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 it is described by Ecker in "The Possibility of a Multicultural Art Education":

> 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. (15)

As an insider, and in order to accomplish such a task of describing a large quantity of information collected by him since 1986 as part of his field research, "the researcher as artist" kept his notes in a series of chronological logo books. Keeping notes as an "insider" account was not a simple task.

Malinowski pointed 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. (247)

Starting his field research, the researcher first examined all Plexus sources available, dating back to 1982. Among those were records, relics and interviews with participants in Plexus events. He then identified and organised 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 (165-166) 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 research procedures such as comparison 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, described by Barzun and Graff (109-144). Verification procedures were useful to double control the outline of a chronological and categorical inventory of Plexus primary sources. Following verification procedures he identified and organised records and relics from Plexus events made from 1982 to the present, related consistently 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. To them the researcher sent a letter requesting their participation, see copy in appendix B, 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 "artist as

researcher", he made room for suggestions and criticism by arranging for having

sent the transcriptions to the participants before presenting them in this

dissertation. By turning his experience into a narrative discourse, he followed

and modified in part the field procedural steps described by Edward M. Bruner in

Ethnography as Narrative:

> 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. (147 -148)

The researcher, aware that he had to cast his multicultural investigation

with the community-based nature of art project under study, modified the 3rd etic

telling step of Bruner by inserting first the emic move of bringing back to the

sources the data collected from them, in this case to the community of Plexus

participants, to be emically validated by their verification. Only after he

accomplished this emic step did he feel sure to move forward, following Bruner's

etic step to bring the data to the scientific community.

Bruner acknowledges narrative ethnographies as coauthored works

between the anthropologist and his informants. The researcher did the same

following Bruner's acknowledgment. He recognizes the coauthorship of all

Plexus "insiders" who have shared with him their experiences and contributed

with their emic understanding to make this multicultural study feasible. Bruner

points out:

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. (148)

Bruner further in dealing with the question of the coauthorship and of the sharing participation between insiders and outsiders, within their emic and etic distinction, raises the problem of the separation of identity between subject of the research and the object of it, which deals directly with the researcher's problem of this study:

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 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. (149)

The emic accounts by Plexus participants are reported in chapter IV and are used as primary sources of this multicultural study.

The methodological problem of interpreting "insider" narratives made by Plexus participants was managed by combining emic and etical procedures presented by Kenneth L. Pike, and Marvin Harris in <u>Emics and Etics. The Insider/Outsider Debate</u>. For Pike an "emic" unit is as follows:

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. (28)

He further describes several features of an "emic" unit:

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). (29)

The researcher follows 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. (33-34)

Marvin Harris argues, in dealing with the validity of Pike's claim of the feasibility of insiders becoming outsiders and of outsiders becoming insiders, as follows:

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 people they are studying. Normally, what happens is that they simply become better observers. (77)

John W. Berry, in Emics and Etics. The Insider/Outsider Debate, presents the data collected with different emic and etic procedures as not part of a rigid dichotomy, " but often present the same data from two points of view". (87)

The researcher as an "insider" employed a reflexive double mirror attitude to try to gain the necessary etic and emic detachment from the object of his study. This attitude is clearly described by Myerhoff and Ruby in A Crack in the Mirror:

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" (3).

The researcher following this horizon used both perspectives in managing the field research of this study. He methodologically started as an "outsider" organizing with an etic behaviour the research and of its field, then as an "insider" he moved to an emic understanding made as a relevant shift of paradigm providing a solution of the problem stated in the beginning of the dissertation.

As a consequence of the general crisis of the contemporary scientific thought, this shift of paradigms in ethnographical inquiries is described in Anthropology as Cultural Critique. An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences by George E. Marcus and Michael M. J. Fischer as 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 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. (118)

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 <u>The Structure of Scientific Revolutions</u> 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. The historical paradigm's role is pointed out by Kuhn as follows:

> 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 shows 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. (109)

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. This change of mode is clearly described by Kuhn as follows:

> 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 suddenly transported to another planet where familiar objects are seen in a different light and are joined by unfamiliar ones as well. (111)

Following this emic understanding "the artists as researcher" started to become more aware of the relevance of the "insiders" accounts. Plexus tribal talk provides an "insider" sense of understanding, which sometimes from an "outsider" understanding is not understandable. Ecker in <u>The Artistic Process as Qualitative Problem Solving</u> points out the relevance of "insider" accounts.

> 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 generalisations 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 (284).

The analysis by the researcher of this complex of understandings, from different inside and outside points of view, of the "Plexus Black Box" was considered a problem-solution-problem continuum with the artistic process from which it developed. Ecker further points out:

> 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 (285).

The researcher, since 1986, following as an insider the artistic process from which in 1989 "Plexus Black Box" originated, kept a phenomenological approach in writing his notes as it is described by Ecker in <u>Introduction: Instituting Qualitative Evaluation in the Arts</u>:

> 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 (14).

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 historic 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.

Idhe points out in Experimental Phenomenology. An Introduction how object and subject are deeply correlate:

> 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 artist as 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, as it was pointed out by Gadamer in The Hermeneutics of Suspicion:

> 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. (58)

The researcher as interpreter, and in the case under study he is also an insider, has his own historicity which points to a specific angle of interpretation, "an interpretative participation," as Gadamer states in The Hermeneutics of Suspicion. Interpretation as a process of "participation" is determined by a

widespread and ongoing cultural processes of understanding, made by

approximation and the overcoming of errors, in which the identity of the

interpreter is always partly constitutive of this hermeneutical process of

understanding as Gadamer states:

> "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 (64).

No method can transcend the interpreter's own historicity. Even if we can achieve

distance, Gadamer argues that "we actually interpret an interpretation".

In The Relevance of the Beautiful (68), he 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.

In Reason in the Age of Science, 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! (106)

He further describes the endlessness of the task of the hermeneutical procedures in

approaching the interpretation of a text:

> 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 elaborate an awareness of the hermeneutic situation. (107)

Further he clearly points out 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. (108)

The idea of the validity of the scientific method is by Gadamer in <u>Reason in the</u>

<u>Age of Science</u> challenged:

> 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. (156)

The researcher, dealing with his own lived experience of "Plexus Black Box"and with those of other Plexus insiders, performed an ongoing first-hand understanding of the complex of questions raised by this study.

Don Ihde describes in <u>Experimental Phenomenology. An Introduction</u> a series of operational rules to be followed in the first level of a phenomenological investigation.

> 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*.. (34)

> 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. (35-36)

> 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. (37)

> Idhe introducing the second level of a phenomenological investigation by

looking for the essential features of the phenomena, referred not just as particularities, presents the fourth hermeneutic rule which is "*Seek out structural or invariant features of the phenomena.*" (39)

> So far, I have been discussing *phenomenological reductions* , those methodological devices that clear the field and specify how it is to be approached. (41)

> In "Aesthetic Inquiry" by Ecker, Kaelin et al., the phenomenological

procedure of the "epoché" is pointed out 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. (583-584)

Ecker and Kaelin describe the epoché technique as able to allow 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," introducing in this way John Dewey's notion of "felt quality of the immediate."

> 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. (584)

In "Phenomenology as a Way of Illuminating Dance" 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"(142) such as beginnings, endings, and passages referring to the history of art. She further argues:

> 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. (143)

The researcher, in order to *grasp as such* foundational *change*, followed the hermeneutical and phenomenological methodological procedures pointed out by Alfred Schutz in Reflections on the Problem of Relevance, shifting continuously the focus of his attention, going back and forward from the margins of his pre-known kernel of an insider of the project, in order to overcome the doubt of the

reliability of first impressions. As an insider already with the "stock of knowledge at hand" of "Plexus Black Box,' he intentionally and continuously changed his way of looking to the sources, as within an hermeneutical circle, performing an ongoing dialectic process, from misunderstanding to understanding, from the idea of the whole to the perception of the parts of it. Schutz defines a "stock of knowledge at hand" as follows:

> [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 (66).

Schutz refers to interpretative methodology as the "proper determination of what is interpretationally relevant with respect to a previously prevailing topic" (129). 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 as Alfred Schutz introducing the notion of "stock of knowledge at hand", has its roots in the sedimented experiences of the interpreter, and upon which depends the process of understanding from misunderstanding.

The system of relevances of the artist as researcher, which as Schutz points out, prevailing at any particular autobiographical moment, set guides for actions by which decisions of the investigation were made and which, in turn, determined the horizon of the thematic field of the research, by bringing in 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 horizonal 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. (66)

The artist as researcher in the preparatory procedures, as a necessary condition to

challenge his first effort at understanding, in order to *grasp as such* the living act

of his experience, performed a series of artificial voluntary acts of reflection to

explore intrinsic relevant structures which create several "provinces of reality"

within "Plexus Black Box" was experienced.

> 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....(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

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 horizonal, ancillary, subordinate in relation to what
> is the prevailing theme. (11)

The artist as researcher, as an insider of the project under study, applied his

"stock of knowledge at hand" by selecting as first "home base" the province of

Plexus 23s, which is the identity under which the researcher as an "insider"

operates 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 horizonal we have to assume an artificial split of the unity of our personality. (12)

The researcher started from the "actual interest" of Plexus 23s his performance of the analysis of the system of relevances, from the structurization of a voluntary "artificial" thematic center and surrounding horizonal 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). (67)

> "The actual interest" of Plexus 23s by the artist as researcher, limiting the

"level of investigation", and "depending upon the autobiographical and situational circumstances of the individual", created the borderline of the segment placed under question. Schutz points out that there are not isolated questions, each is interrelated with the other, and are interpretationally 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). (68)

In order to change the conditions of observation it is necessary to act *in such a way* that the decision of how to act is part of a "chain of interrelated motivational relevances". Schutz argues that "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 show 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.
> (70)

The artist as 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 which was leading his methodological
hermeneutical process, continuously created different observational conditions of
looking new "insider" additional interpretatively relevant materials, until when
the problem at hand he felt to have sufficiently clarified and solved for the
purpose 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. (70)

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 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 operated in looking at "insiders" sources as it is described previously, in Chapter IV "looks" at collected accounts by Plexus participants with a deconstructionist lens, overturning the hierarchical setting and looking of texts of Western philosophers, as it is pointed out by Jacques Derrida in <u>Positions</u>: "To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment (41).

The researcher, by placing his interpretation at the margins of the "insiders" accounts to produce a valid multicultural study, in Chapter IV methodologically challenges 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 presents as equally relevant all "insider" understandings as significant components of his multicultural hermeneutical aesthetic inquiry.

The placing at the margins of texts interpretational accounts is an effective deconstructive move, as Jacques Derrida claims in <u>Margins of Philosophy</u> "in order to leave irreversible marks"(xxii), which becomes necessary to deal with

the multiplicity of meanings, to avoid the passivity of the analysis with respect to

the authority of the role and in order to find an exit from the labyrinth of

interpretations as it is argued further by Derrida:

> Will the multiplicity of these tympanums permit themselves to be
> analyzed? Will we be led back, at the exit of the labyrinths....
>   It may be about this multiplicity that philosophy, being situated,
> inscribed, and included within it, has never been able to reason.
> Doubtless, philosophy will have sought the reassuring and absolute rule,
> the norm of this polysemia. It will have asked itself if a tympanum is
> natural or constructed, if one does not always come back to the unity of a
> stretched, bordered, framed cloth that watches over its margins as virgin,
> homogenous, and negative space, leaving its outside outside, without
> mark, without opposition, without determination....(xxvii)

Derrida further argues, in reference to the question of the margin:

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

To deal with the problem of different levels of discourse in the project

under study, the artist as researcher used the Ecker - Kaelin's Taxonomy,

described in "The Limits of Aesthetic Inquiry: A Guide to Educational Research."

The taxonomic model proposed is 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. Those are the

following:

Experiences with objects/events; art objects/events are perceived, performed,

produced.

Criticism; aesthetic judgments are made and justified.

Aesthetic judgments are analysed and evaluated.

Theory; art and art criticism is explained.

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 artist as 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, as Ecker and

Kaelin point out:

> ...,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 aesthetic contemplation, the use of language to describe
> or evaluate the art work affects what can be known through aesthetic
> inquiry. (266)

At the end of the study a multicultural understanding is presented by the

researcher who presents his inquiry with an open end, not as a conclusion,

because, he argues, it is about a still ongoing project, but as a critical contribution

to a multicultural esthetic understanding.   In chapter VI, the researcher grounded

his multicultural interpretation upon a kind of emic- etic re-casting hermeneutic

process, made from his close reading of all "insiders" understandings of "Plexus

Black Box."

Glossary

In order to study the multilevel complexity of events, the researcher identified most frequent referential names used by Plexus participants. His identification, verified with other Plexus participants, is offered as an outlined Plexus glossary.

"L.I.A.C.A." is the name of the Italian League of Alternative Cultural Associations that operated in Italy in the middle of '70s. It organized in Rome the first art slave market show in 1978.

”The artist in the first person” is the name for the artist as a cultural independent producer. It was made as the name for an Italian cultural program presented by Sandro Dernini and Luigi Ballerini, at New York University, in 1980.

"In Order to Survive" is the name of the jazz statement by William Parker performed as a street open call event, in front of the Shuttle Theatre, in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, in 1984.

"The Shuttle Theatre" is the name of a multiform community space in the Lower East Side, opened by Giuseppe Sacchi, Sandro Dernini, Brian Goodfellow, and Karl Berger, in 1984. There Plexus found hospitality after the closing of its performance space, in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan, in the beginning of 1984.

"CUANDO" is the name of a community cultural center in the Lower East Side neighborhood of Manhattan. "CUANDO" stands for "Culturas Unidas Aspiraran Nuestro Destino Original"

“Purgatorio Shows” is the name of large multimedia events dedicated to Ralston Farina, in which hundreds of artists are performing at the same time, within an “atelier des arts” environment, which allows to perform all kinds of

possible art forms and languages. They were held in New York, at CUANDO, in 1985 and in 1986.

"Time Art" is the name of a concept, created by Ralston Farina, who related art and time to gravity. "Time Art" is used by Plexus to escape from gravity and to fly over the gravitational weight of Western rationality.

"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 created through a modular construction process which follows a libretto made by one or more authors. It was performed at the Community Cultural Center CUANDO, in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, in 1985 and 1986, and in Rome at the Metateatro, in 1989.

" Art-Coopera" or "Artcoopera" is the name by Leonard Horowitz for a multi arts event made through "Plexus compressionist art process." It is built on a modular construction process of individual art contributions, of any kind. converging into a collective antilibretto, mutually made by "insider" collective understandings, imaginations and emotions. It was performed in the megalith sanctuary of Sa Itria in Sardinia, in 1987, and in Rome at the Ridotto del Colosseo Theatre, in 1990.

"Modular construction" is the name of a facilitatory theatre process by Willem Brugman, to allow individual energies to work together. It was experimented in Plexus for the first time in the art-opera Eve, Escape for Donna Purgatorius from Anno Domini by the Multi Chain Gang of Downtown, N.Y., at CUANDO, in 1986.

"Art Slave Ship" is the name of a metaphorical art slave installation made in occasion of Eve, Escape for Donna Purgatorius from Anno Domini by the

Multi Chain Gang of Downtown, N.Y., at CUANDO, in 1986. It is performed as an ongoing travelling art installation.

"The Nuraghic Mutant" is the name of a statuette of a copy of an ancient Nuraghic warrior with four arms, four eyes, and two antennas, that is defending the freedom of the continuation of the art slave ship journey since its escaping from the Artworld control, made in New York, at Eve artopera, held at CUANDO, in 1986.

"Nuraghic" is the name of the pre-Roman culture of Sardinian people.

"Plexus compressionist art process" is the name of the Plexus art process by Leonard Horowitz creating an interactive compression and expansion of time and space. It is experimented in artoperas, artcooperas, Purgatorios Shows., and it is used in all Plexus photo group shots.

"Rivington School" is the name of a metal sculpture workshop conducted by Ray Kelly and other artists since early '80s in the Lower East Side neighborhood of Manhattan, from where it was launched the Plexus International Open Call Against Art Slavery in 1988.

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

"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.

"Art Logic" is the name of the strategic eating art map by Sandro Dernini published in Passport for Plexus Passport. Its is related to what in anthropology is known as life logic.

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

'The Voyage of the Elisabeth" is the name of a project proposal by David Ecker, in order to survive the masters of the living traditions in art, it was made in New York in 1990.

"The Buddha" is the name of a statuette representing a Tibetan Buddha that Don Cherry gave at the Shuttle Theatre, in New York, in 1984. Actually it is on board the Elisabeth, in Sardinia, since 1985.

"The American Indian Chief" is the name of a statuette representing a native American warrior that refers to three different statuette.
The first one of a yellow color was given by Mikey Pinero in 1984 in New York, at the Shuttle Theatre . This statuette was the house's spiritual protector of the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, a famous cultural place, in the neighborhood of the Lower East Side, closed at that time in middle '80s.   Mikey Pinero, one of the founders, gave the statuette to the present researcher, at that time one of the organizers of the Shuttle Theatre. It was placed at the entrance of the Shuttle Theatre and became the house's protector of the Shuttle and of Plexus. It was lost in the fire accident of the Shuttle Theatre in 1985.
The second one is a red color copy of the first one that the artist as researcher found in a local shop in the Lower East Side, in 1988. It is placed since 1989 at the entrance of the new Nuyorican Poets Cafe in the Lower East Side.
The third one is a red color copy of the first one with a little color difference from the second one that the artist as researcher found in an other local shop in 1992. Jose Rodriguez, one of the N.Y. coordinators of Plexus International, has it.

"La Barchetta dell'Arte" (The Little Art Boat) is the name of a little toy boat that refers to two different toys.

The first "La Barchetta della Liberta' dell'Arte" (The Little Toy Art Boat of Art Freedom) was a little toy boat that was transformed in a work of art by

Gaetano Brundu in Cagliari, Sardinia, in 1988, and left in Dakar after its arrival at the House of the Slaves in Goree Island in 1989.

The second one, "Colombina" is the copy of the first one. It was found by the artist as researcher in 1991, in a shop in the port of Carloforte, in front to the Elisabeth boat. It was transformed by Silvio Betti in a work of art. He has placed the name of Elisabeth and of the ISALTA (International Society for the Advancement of Living Traditions in Art) on its board. He placed under the bottom a copy of George Chaikin's optical device drawing. On the sail of the little toy boat, he place the logo of the Project Against Apartheid. This second boat is hold by Dr. John Rocchio, a pediatrician at the St. Vincent Hospital in New York. Since 1991 it refers to Columbina Reconciliation Project, one of the Plexus fleet of project proposals presented to the Italian Well Being Scientific Committee in 1991 and actually carried forward by Plexus International and the Consortium for the Well Being in the XXI Century. Colombina is also the name of a little cat.

"Plexonian Art Money" is the name of several art works by Micaela Serino representing Italian legal money bills transformed artistically in Plexus money, made in Rome, in 1988, in support of the opening in Goree island of the World Art Bank.

"Haddamard Matrix" is the name of the mathematical configuration followed by George Chaikin in making the drawing of his optical device. Ralston Farina in 1984 pointed out the Haddamard Matrix as a tool to escape from time and gravity.

"Ningki-Nangka" is the name of an African invisible mythological serpent, as well as the name of an art coopera project by Assane M'Baye in which the invisible serpent is presented with an apple on its head, and two wings flying above the World Trader Center Towers of New York.

"Plexus Black Box" is the name of an object and a concept which was 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.