

Seeing what cannot be seen. Catastrophe as a turning point.

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In the book *RUN*, that I wrote in collaboration with Alessandro Sarti, mathematician and bioengineer, we had been working on the subject of morphogenesis, generation of forms: living organisms, synthetic images, visual shapes, social formations.

At the core of the book we focus on *Imagination*, which can be considered the commencement of the process of form-creation.

Imagination can be defined as the recombination of what has been seen, but also the creation of something new that we have not seen yet .

Seeing and imagining are two different phases in the process of visual morphogenesis. From the point of view of *Vision*, we can distinguish different kinds of things: visible, invisible, transvisible.

Invisible things are different in nature: some things are invisible because they are not things, but abstractions (like mathematical objects). Some things are invisible because they simply do not exist (like the winged horse, and many more mythological animals). And finally, some things are invisible because they cannot be framed by the human eye, or because the eye is not (yet) able to distinguish them. Things that we cannot see because we are not yet accustomed to recognize their shape, belong to the domain of transvisibility.

During the twentieth century Art has tried to see what usually cannot be seen.

Think of Divisionism: its aim was to see the matter of light, the combination and recombination of elementary units of light.

Think of Cubofuturism: its aim was to see the movement of visible things, and the different plateaux of Reality intersecting in the space.

Think of the relationship between Art and Biogenetics, today. The principle of recombination has penetrated the field of Art, and Art has been seeking the visual language of becoming.

When we think of the relationship between Art and Biogenetics, we are asking ourselves a question, and the question is this: is it possible to see the epigenetic process? Is it possible to see the process of Becoming-Other?

Is it possible to imagine the jump from the zero-dimensional level of the genetic Code (Information) to the multi-dimensional level of the organism living in time?



Georges Seurat, Female nude, 1886

The biogenesis and the generation of visible forms on the screen of a computer have something in common: both informatics and biogenetics are morphogenetic processes, both imply a jump from the zero-dimensional level of information to the multi-dimensional level of visibility.

Trans-visibility is the possibility of seeing what cannot be seen.

During the twentieth century Art has dealt with this problem: to “make” visible what actually is impossible to see. When Giacomo Balla paints *A lady with a dog* he is trying to capture the movement of the legs and of the leash. When Umberto Boccioni paints *Les états d'âme* he is trying to capture the very process of psychic motions.

The philosopher Henri Bergson emphasized the relationship between Kinematic art and Consciousness. The Kinema, he says, is the medium that allows to objectify the durational process of consciousness.

And Delaunay directly refers to Bergson when he says that the futurists are trying to make consciousness visible.



Umberto Boccioni "Les états d'âme", "Ceux qui partent" 1911

In the book that I wrote with my friend Alessandro Sarti, we also propose to look at social morphogenesis in a recombinant way. What is happening in the social field is the perpetual recombination of fragments of knowledge, projects and tools.

Recombination changes the shape of things, and makes visible what was impossible to see.

Recombination makes possible actions that were impossible to perform in the social field.

In these times, the problem of morphogenesis in the social field is especially urgent.

The global collapse of 2008 emphasizes the need of a new paradigm in the organisation of labour and of social consumption; a new paradigm in the relationship between labour and revenue.

Also in the social landscape there is something that we cannot see.

The process of social morphogenesis (social conflicts, economic crisis, political revolutions) is marked by the passage from a landscape where something is hidden to a new landscape where something can be seen.

The passage from invisibility to visibility is marked by Catastrophic turning points.

Actually the word catastrophe means a change in the location of the subject making possible a new vision, and a new action: *kata* in greek means below, beyond, in another place. And *strophein* means to move, to displace, to change.

Therefore catastrophe is the move that allows us to see spaces that could not be seen by the previous point of view.

The socio-political side of the process of morphogenesis is the subject of the last chapter of our book.

We wrote this book during the years of the emergence of the anti-globalisation movement, in the years of Seattle and Genova.

The movement that started in Seattle has been animated by the cognitive labourers: i.e. creative, scientific and educational labourers.

Our point of view is the same point of view of many researchers and cognitive labourers who have demonstrated and acted against the profit-oriented management of social knowledge.

The next wave of Emancipation from Capitalist Rule will be a process of autonomisation of Knowledge. And the process of self-organization of social knowledge needs a new conceptual framework, which has nothing to do with the conceptual framework of the twentieth century, dominated by the problem of Expression (versus Repression).

The new world is not based on Expression, it is based on Recombination.

If we want to understand the emergence of new social forms we have to abandon the old concepts of revolution, totality and Auf-hebung, but we also have to abandon the conceptual tools of representative democracy.

We should think of the current global crisis in terms of recombination and of morphogenesis.

The current catastrophe (the financial collapse and the upcoming recession) is going to show to everybody a new landscape. A scenario which is not so funny to see, at first glance. But which also might provide for new solutions that yesterday we could not even have imagined.

The current catastrophe opens up a gash of visibility for a totally new landscape.



Gerhard Richter
Townscape Madrid
1968