

Blue Desert Tower

An artistic reflection about Europe



Interview with Andrea Ferrara - Contemporary artist

The symbolic value of blue desert tower

The importance of culture for a Mediterranean common identity

"Europe is like an imaginary desert, an incomplete entity, made of a plurality of ideas, expectations, experiences which make it incomplete." With these words begins the interview to Andrea Ferrara, contemporary artist and author of the "BLUE DESERT TOWER", contemporary installation displayed for the first time at the Convitto della Calza (Florence) on the occasion of the event "Europe 2020: innovation of the Mediterranean" organized by the Tuscany Region. Over the century, Art has expressed the complexity and the critical aspects of the world, giving advices and indications to overcome the difficulties that we had to face off. Contemporary art, particularly, often in a transgressive way, gives us an image of the present, of what happens and what should be.

Andrea Ferrara's work of art gathers perfectly these objectives, mixing in an single installation (a three meters tower made of transparent material) lights and sounds which, thanks to a complex system of sensors, involve the audience in an unique poetic experience, creating a suggestive effect. This interactive work of art has an important symbolic value for the culture of the Mediterranean cooperation, expressing the reflection of the artist about Europe and its relationships with the external world and particularly with the Mediterranean. In 1980, Belgian artist Jean Verame came to the

Sinai to paint a line of peace: with the permission of Anwar Sadat and a grant of ten tons of paint from the UN, the artist managed to paint four miles of the Sinai. One year later, the area between Dahab and Saint Caterina became the Blue Desert.

How was the Blue Desert Tower idea born?

With this work of art I would like to make a reflection about Europe. Actually, Europe, on one side, is an Eden, a promised earth for all those people which search for an opportunity for the present and the future; on the other side, it is like an inaccessible fortress, symbolically represented by the tower of glass. On the inside, Europe is like an imaginary desert, an incomplete entity, made of a multiplicity of ideas, expectations, experiences which make it incomplete. This multiplicity of elements is represented, in the work of art, by the mix of languages (23 European languages) which mix together in a symposium that become more intense as we approach to the Tower.

"Today we live in an electric world; our dreams, to be activated and thus be visible to the others, become electric" these are the words that Philip K. Dick wrote 40 years ago. Your artistic career often is an interaction between visual and technological elements, where multimediality is integrated in sceneries and settings, creating a dialogue and a synergy between the audience and the reality around it. The arts interact in a context where reality and fiction overlap, almost in a subliminal way.

How is this type of work created? Which artists have influenced you the most?

In my artistic work, I am influenced by a multiplicity of artists and by very different forms of art. Personally I am a musician, so the sound is always at the core of my works and, in many cases, it is really functional for the work of art. This is particularly true in the case of the Blue Desert Tower where I inserted a sequence of 23 European languages which follow an imaginary path which, departing from Malta (the centre of the Wind Rose), ideally crosses all the European States, showing the complexity and the heterogeneity of Europe.

This year 2011 has started with a serious political and social crisis in the South shore of the Mediterranean. The European national governments look unable to act and, first of all, to understand what it is happening. In this sense, the interactive work of art has a dramatic symbolic value for the Mediterranean culture.



Can the different inputs and the different languages find a common identity, at least in the emotional sphere, through suggestions and meditative spaces?

I think so. we can't forget that we share common origins with the countries of the south shore of the Mediterranean. this is true despite the fact that , at the present moment, Europe is growing away from its origin and from this common line. for me, in particular, the decadence and the difficulties of the south shore countries is a precursory event of what could happen in Europe if we don't give importance to culture and its promotion (because of the economic crisis or the political indifference). for me, culture has loosened its role as element for cohesion and union of Europe and the Mediterranean.

Which works of art are you actually carrying out?

I have programmed different works of art. Actually I'm working at the elaboration of a dance performance in collaboration with a Belgian dance company, a biotic dance performance for 4 dancers and live electronics, where dancers wear an helmet that transforms their brain waves in sounds, expressing the altered consciousness states of the dancers. The first exhibition took place in Bruxelles, the 28th April and a second performance took place in Florence the 6th and 7th May 2011.

Cecilia Luppichini

ANDREA FERRARA

After the Diploma in Classical Guitar, Andrea Ferrara approached electronic music at the beginning of the nineties by attending the Summer Courses at the Centro di Sonologia Computazionale in Padova. In 2005 he obtained the Diploma in Electronic Music at the Conservatorio A. Boito in Parma.

He is a member of the AIMI (Associazione di Informatica Musicale Italiana) and of IXEM (Italian EXperimental Music), for which he has contributed to a compilation of emerging Italian composers.

He is currently collaborating with the Centro Tempo Reale, founded by Luciano Berio in Florence, where he lectures on digital sound and is a guest composer, and the MARTLab at the Conservatorio L. Cherubini in Florence.

He works and composes at the *Ongaku Studios* in Florence, teaches the Musical Acoustics course at the Conservatorio G.B. Martini in Bologna, and he is a Cosmology Professor at the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa.

He has written several electro-acoustic compositions for magnetic tape, traditional instruments and live electronics, some of which have received awards at electronic music competitions; among them the environmental soundscape for the video *Offerta Immaginarica* of the Russian director A. Tarkovskij.

He has also written music for performances, dance and installations (a major installation work is *Nomadic Time*, an interactive multimedia installation in which a cavy/performer locked in a cage is forced to watch a series of projected images and, through a EEG machine, his emotions are expressed in cerebral wave emission; this installation has been exhibited at the Centro di Cultura Contemporanea in Palazzo Strozzi, Florence)

Website: www.ongakuaw.eu.