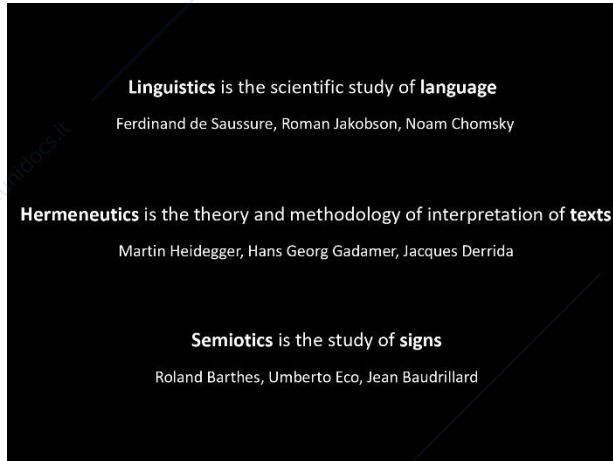


CONCEPTUAL ART, PERFORMING AND VIDEO ART (PART I)

Conceptual art is a kind of research that is quite hard to understand unless you put yourself inside the typical cultural climate of the 1960s. It was a period in which philosophy was focused on structuralism, which is not in fact a philosophy rather a methodology focused in understanding the meaning of structures and systems. Artists started blending into the nature of art, trying to understand their nosology. What kind of knowledge can we get from the arts? In developing their work and research, they are mostly focused on processes rather than in results. The outcomes of this "season" are against object inflation, a kind of non-objectual art. The idea, therefore, the concept, prevails over the material result. Obviously, there is also a kind of reaction about the market (consumerism); the fact that art is simply treated as a normal kind of good.



This research/process involves disciplines that are related to the study of language (linguistics). Authors that may be involved in this are Ferdinand de Saussure, Roman Jakobson or Noam Chomsky. Another area that is strongly involved is Hermeneutics; the theory and methodology of interpretation of texts. Here we find philosophers like Martin Heidegger, Hands Georg Gadamer and Jacques Derrida. Finally, semiotics as the study of signs, with people like Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco and Jean

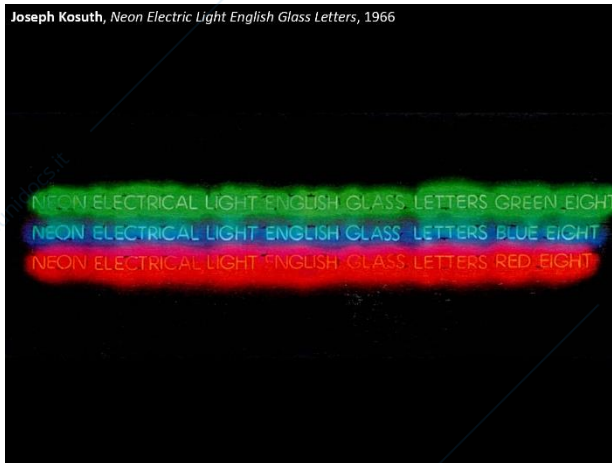
Baudrillard. Why are we quoting these three areas? Because fundamentally it is again as it was in the early 20th century, a matter of understanding a formal communication and a language. In that case, artists were investigating precisely the kind of languages that the art could develop in such society. Here we are trying to understand the philosophical side of what a language is because most of art production doesn't involve formal language. It is always a matter of understanding signs and that is why is so relevant the contribution of semiotics. At the same time, other formalised areas such as linguistics and hermeneutics are relevant. You should imagine artists involving this kind of studies rather than making things. It is more an intellectual activity rather than an artistic one in the traditional sense. This is why it is so hard to understand the meaning of these art pieces and installations. [Professor is trying to frame the conceptual art intellectual environment, we do not need to study the production of all these people.]



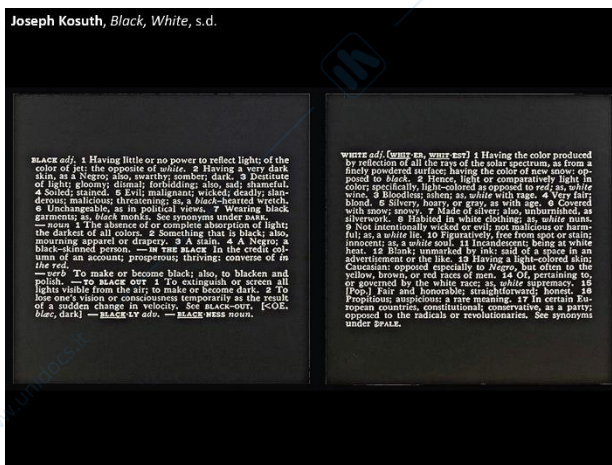
One of the authors that really focused on the topic (one of the fathers of this research) is by no doubt Joseph Kosuth. This is the typical installation in this context. It is made of three objects and the title is in fact, Three chairs. We look at one real chair in the middle, there is a large picture more or less at a real scale of the chair itself and then there is a board with a text of the definition of a chair that you can find on the dictionary. There are three actions here represented: 1- to present the object (the chair itself), 2-

to represent (the picture of the chair) and finally, 3- to describe (a text describing the concept of chair). Each one of these three elements stays for a way of producing art. The chair stays for sculpture, the picture stays for painting, and finally, the definition from vocabulary stays for

literature. To explain these kind of installations, Joseph Kosuth himself wrote several essays. In one very famous entitled "Art after philosophy", he says: "a work of art is a kind of proposition presented within the context of art as a comment on art". So, we are absolutely inside a kind of intellectual dispute. If we look at this picture, the fundamental thing we can understand is again nosology – what can we learn from art? What can we learn from this installation? The fact that these three chairs are fundamentally different, although they explain or talk about the same concept. The way with which we approach a problem using the tools of sculpture, painting or literature produces a different kind of knowledge, although focusing on the same subject. We learn three different things in three different ways. This is the fundamental meaning of this installation, and it is quite remarkable.



Similarly in this work, Kosuth investigates the role of titles. Professor was saying in a previous lesson "The title is important, even when the author decides not to give a title to his artwork and he names it untitled, it means something." In this case, the work of art is the title itself. It is repeated three times, and the only thing that changes is the colour: green, blue, red (RGB). So, the investigation is about the role of the title. You can completely reverse the content and transform the title itself as the work.



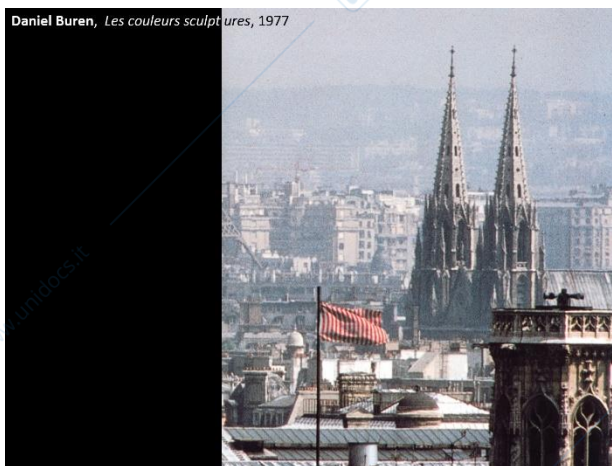
Again, these two squared boards have the same dimension and colour (black), and on them there is something written in white. The text talks about two fundamental materials of painting: black and white. There is a definition of the concept of the black on one board and the concept of the white on the other. If we judge what we look from the perspective, we see two boards that are fundamentally the same, but they are talking about two concept that we usually think as opposites one to the other. We

usually say in common language "to see things black or white". It is an opposition but the way in which Kosuth let us have an experience of the two is fundamentally the same, and it is a kind of contradictory experience.

All and each one of these art pieces try to answer to the same question: what is art? In this respect, the heritage of Marcel Duchamp is fundamental. In fact, the 1960s were named the "decade of the re-evaluation of Marcel Duchamp's work" and he appears as the Nobel father of conceptual art.



We go now to France and find this artist that nowadays is probably one of the most famous artists in France and Europe. At the beginning of the 1970s, he was a very young man, just starting his own career. He was involved in a group of artists named BMPT, from the names of the four artists involved: Daniel Buren himself, Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier and Niele Toroni. They were very radical in their work. This is the typical example of the art Daniel Buren did in those years. It is a piece of fabric used in beach umbrellas (printed fabric). This striped banner will become Buren's trademark in the following years. He changed the colours, he moved from red and white to black and white, and then he made other experimentations but anytime you find something striped like this in an art content or environment, probably has been made by Daniel Buren. The BMPT group was very radical, and this is a short sentence by them: "given that painting is a game, that painting is an exploration of imagination, that painting is aimed as an end, that painting is to give a static value to flowers, women, eroticism, daily environment, art, dadaism, psychoanalysis and the war in Vietnam, we should not be painters". These objects, this piece of fabric, are against the arts in general and against paintings and the role of painters in society. Although they were so radical, they were rapidly accepted by the institutions and in the late 70s, Daniel Buren was already a very acknowledged artist in France. In fact, he was invited to organise the opening exhibition of an institution that from then on (1970s) until nowadays is one of the most famous art institutions in the world: the Centre Georges Pompidou, in the very centre of Paris.



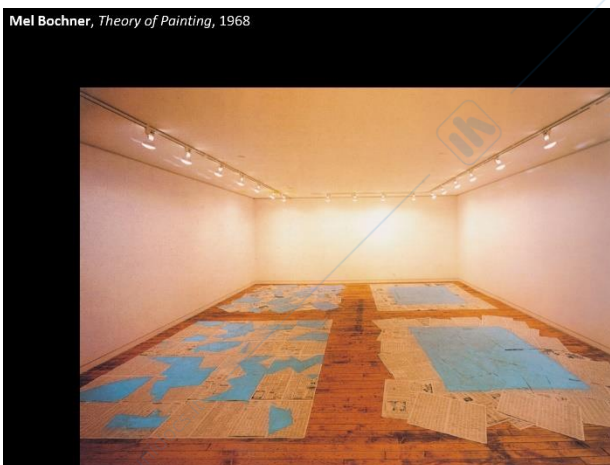
This is a picture from that exhibition. It was called "Colours sculptures". The Centre Pompidou was designed and built by Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano. On top of the building there is a beautiful large terrace and cafeteria. Daniel Buren put on the terrace a series of binoculars each one pointing at an important monument of the city. In this case, you see the binocular is pointing the church of Notre Dame. There are others pointing the Tour Eiffel, the Sacré-Cœur, etc. In the trajectory, from the terrace and the monument there is the typical striped flag in Daniel Buren style. Depending on when you go and watch through the binocular, you have a different experience of the city sky (if it is early in the morning, late at night, if it is foggy, if it is rainy, if it is a sunny day) and the flag stays there to tell you that kind of experience is part of another experience. It is not simply the act of looking at the city itself. So, an art element becomes an actor inside the city scale, an active operator in the city. This is quite important in those years.



There is another very famous exhibition, probably the first exhibition in which the art was not only spread around the city but also it was put inside private houses. It is the exhibition called *Chambres d'amis* (rooms of friends). We are in a small city in Belgium called Gand. This small city is historically very famous because it was the place of birth of a very famous man in the history of Europe: Charles V (the emperor of the Spanish empire when it was spread all around the world at the beginning of the 16th century). The exhibition consisted of a tour around the city. When you arrived in the city and went to the museum of Modern Art, you were provided with a map of the city with the address of 50 different private homes inside which you could have a look at these installations. In the upper part of the slide there is an installation by Joseph Kosuth and it is a deleted alphabet. In the lower part we have another with the typical striped decoration by Daniel Buren. The fundamental meaning of this exhibition is that you have to organise your own trip; experiencing the city, meeting people in their own home and watching at these installations are part of this same experience. This is again a matter of living the arts in the connection between people and the city.



Here we have an American artist who is still famous for this kind of strange sentences; Jenny Holzer. Here you see there is this large electric board in the Times Square, New York, with this sentence: "Protect me from what I want". She is very famous precisely for the use of these strange sentences called truisms. A truism is a sentence with an obvious meaning. In this particular case is not so obvious. Why should we protect her from what you want? Maybe she wants something dangerous. It is a tricky thing, we don't really know. This board fundamentally similar to any other advertising in Times Square. The art adopts a language that is typical of other means of communication but completely changing the meaning of what we do. Same tools but completely different meaning.



Here we are with Mel Bochner, who is an artist who investigates the meaning of art and specially the different processes that produce the art (the whole process, not the result). His research is more similar to Kosuth's. He is an intellectual diver. Professor has a few quotations; at a certain moment he says "a work of procedural art (an art interested in its own process) begins with having in mind any defined product. In a work of this kind, the interest is only in the knowledge that the proceedings were step by step carefully and fully proponed". This is the fundamental interest of it. We see here the same process

developed in four different ways, and it is about the relationship between the surface and the newspaper which provide the work with the surface and the squared blue figure stays for the act of painting. You have 4 different interpretation of this relationship between the two. What is interesting is that the author (artist) can simply write instructions and then someone else can work and produce the result. A work of art can be a sheet of paper with a series of instructions, helping someone doing things. In a certain sense, it is definitely a project. Artists are more and more acting as designers rather than as traditional artists.

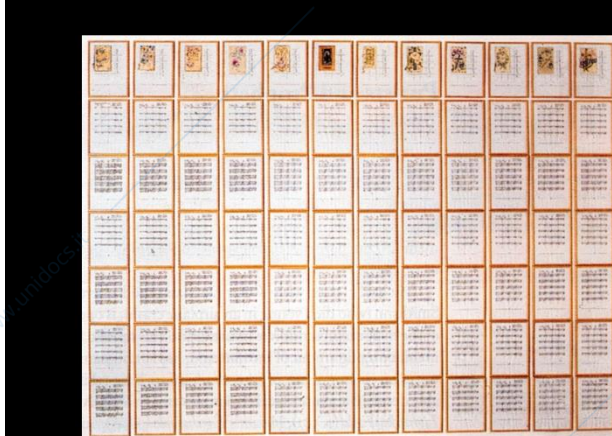
On Kawara, 28 Dec. 1972, 1973



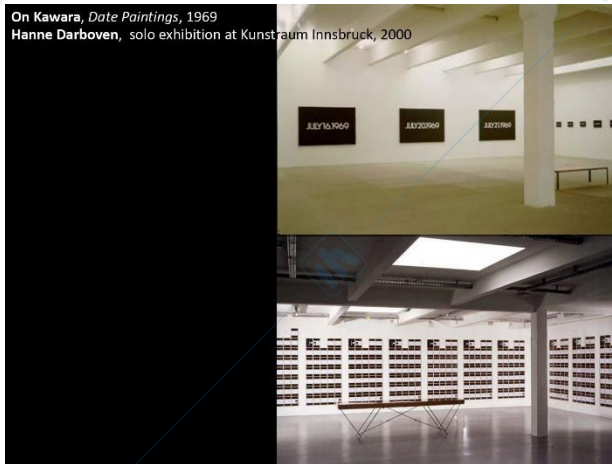
Two artists that are interested in another very complex concept: the passing of time. On Kawara is focused on the passing of public time and Hanne Darboven is interested in the passing of private (intimate) time. Kawara developed a strategy: he chooses the first page of a newspaper written in any language (in this particular case, Swedish), cut the first page and put it into a box. At the same time, he is also making the box. Then, he makes the cover, and, on the cover, it is written the date of the day corresponding

to the newspaper written in the way in which usually dates are written in that country. If this process, that usually starts in the morning, is ended before the end of the day, this becomes part of a series. If for any reason, Kawara doesn't succeed in that, he throws the work away. There is a connection between what happens in that country (news that people read in that day) and the work that Kawara is doing that same day.

Hanne Darboven, Request Concert – 144 Poems, 1984



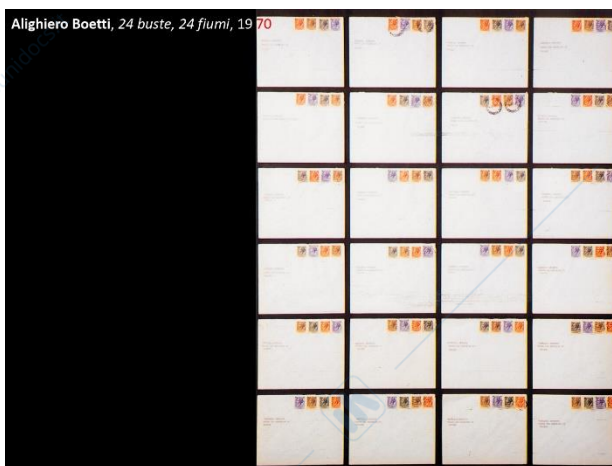
Hanna Darboven, instead, is interested in the private perception of the passing of time. She writes these pages with personal notes with her calligraphy. We cannot really read what it is written in these pages, but we understand that it is a kind of diary written day by day, week by week, month by month. All these processes (both Kawara and Darboven) are designed to be shown inside art galleries and museums.



On Kawara, *Date Paintings*, 1969
Hanne Darboven, solo exhibition at Kunsthaus Innsbruck, 2000

This is the result. You can see Kawara on top and Darboven below. It is quite evident that the power of these installations is in the repetition of the same object and the fact that this object talks about one day (it is the day by day; passing of time). Repetition also produces consistency, and in this respect the same strategy (repetition) produces an opposed result compared to Pop Art. This is quite interesting because they are different uses of the strategy of repetition in a non-commercial way (against

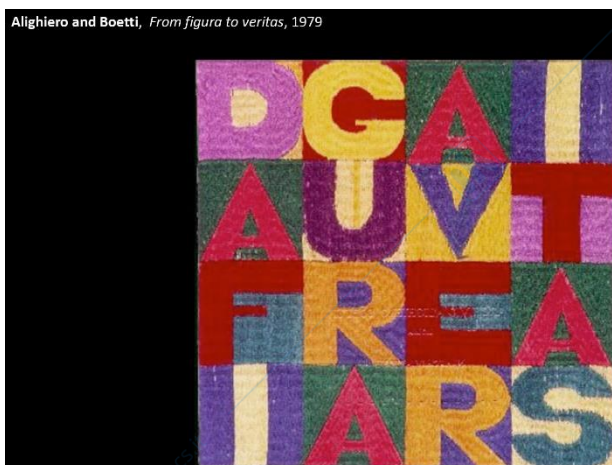
consumerism).



Alighiero Boetti, *24 buste, 24 fiumi*, 1970

Here we move from Europe to Italy, talking about a group of artists (most of them living in Turin) in the 1960s. The art critic Germano Celant labelled this as "Arte Povera". All these artists are very much focused on simple everyday objects (objective poor objects). Alighiero Boetti is one of the most interesting artists of the period in Italy. This artwork is made of simple envelopes. Nowadays we do not send envelopes anymore (we have emails) but at that time, if you wanted to send a letter you used to use an envelope and

also stamps. This work is entitled *24 buste, 24 fiumi* (24 envelopes, 24 rivers). It is not easy to understand the meaning of the title; it has to be explained. Alighiero Boetti bought 24 envelopes and put onto each envelope 4 different stamps which were necessary for posting the envelopes and then wrote his own address on it. He went in 24 different cities in Italy whose elemental feature was to be crossed by a river. In each city he sent the envelope home. When the 24 envelopes arrived back home, each of them had a postmark on it with the name of the city, hour and date of posting. You can see how complex is to do such an art piece; you have to travel, use a public service and this is the result. In a certain sense, it is a complete narration and talks about different things.



Alighiero and Boetti, *From figura to veritas*, 1979

This is another interesting work; an embroidery work. In this squared tapestry, there is written something in Italian which is the same of the title: *From figura to veritas*. The letters are not written in the traditional western way but rather from top to bottom and viceversa. About this kind of works Boetti says: "in order not to create hierarchies between the colours, I use them all. My problem is in fact, not to make choices according to my taste, but to invent systems that then choose for me." This is a very interesting strategy and

one of the main problems of mankind. All humans have to make decisions but if you invent a strategy before, then the strategy itself makes decisions for you and don't have to worry about it.



Similarly, in other examples. This is a very famous one. There is a very beautiful map of the world also in the museum of Novecento in the centre of Milan. Boetti says: "The value of the embroidered map is for me the ultimate in beauty. For that job, I have not done anything. I didn't choose anything in the sense that the world is as it is, the flags are what they are. So, I had to do nothing; simply put correctly the flags on the surface of the country, and this is the result. Not only because I am not the one who makes the embroidery, there are people and precisely, a group of women in Afghanistan, because they are very clever in doing this. It is written on the map; in fact, you see there is a kind of violet border and all the story of the map is written there in their language." You see what a big complexity lies behind a work like this. It is the beginning of a way of producing art in a global world. What is particularly interesting and meaningful is the fact that Boetti does nothing; he is not making, not using his hand. Everything is about a process and nothing related to the typical idea of the artist as a creator. There is nothing to create, everything is already done. You simply need to put things together.



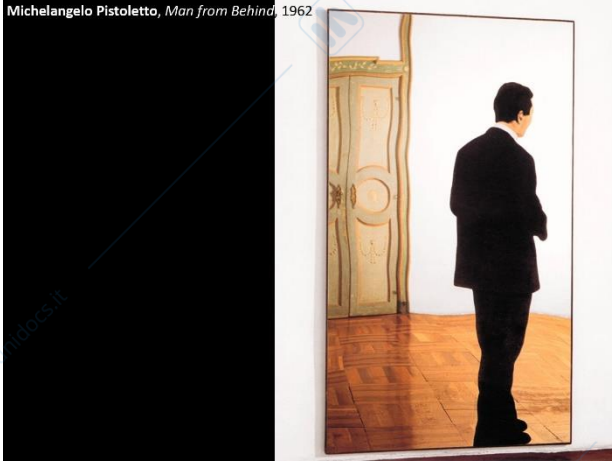
Giuseppe Penone, on the contrary, is someone who likes using hands and using them hard. This is a beautiful sculpture called Book tree. The original 7 elements of this sculpture are normal wooden beams (the kind of material you can use in architecture/building for making a roof or a ceiling). They are natural elements, but you don't really see what is natural in a wooden being unless Giuseppe Penone does this work. He carves the wood, precisely half of the wooden being until he reaches the very core of the object. There, he finds the tree that is inside the beam: the natural elements that once was a living being; a tree. It is precisely the tree when it was very young, at the very beginning. It is a fantastic strategy because it talks about the relationship between artificial and natural, about the idea of growth, about birth and death, about growing and life.



Giovanni Anselmo likes to involve us in tricky games. There is a big block of stone and a smaller block of marble. Between them there is a salad head. The whole thing is tightened by a metal wire. Day by day the salad dries and dies, and in the end the whole structure collapses and the small marble block falls down. The meaning of this is: what is the more powerful element between the marble, the salad head and the stone? Obviously, it is the salad head because without the contribution of the salad head, the

sculpture collapses. Once professor talked to Giovanni Anselmo about this art piece and he told him this was the fundamental meaning of the sculpture, but it also has another one. It is the fact that when you replace the salad and put a new head of salad, it is as if the sculpture rebirths again; it is a renaissance. The sculpture is again fresh. You don't usually think of piece of marble, a sculpture or a work of art as something that can be fresh. This is typical of life, so it is something that is alive.

Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Man from Behind*, 1962



Michelangelo Pistoletto is nowadays probably one of the most famous artists in Italy. He started working in the early 1960s and this is an example of what he did in those years: large polished stainless-steel plates hanged on the wall. On the surface of the plate, it was usually put a silhouette of a person (man, woman or a couple). Usually the person is turning his/her back on you so you don't see the face. What happens is these strange objects that are not paintings is that they reflect everything that is around in the

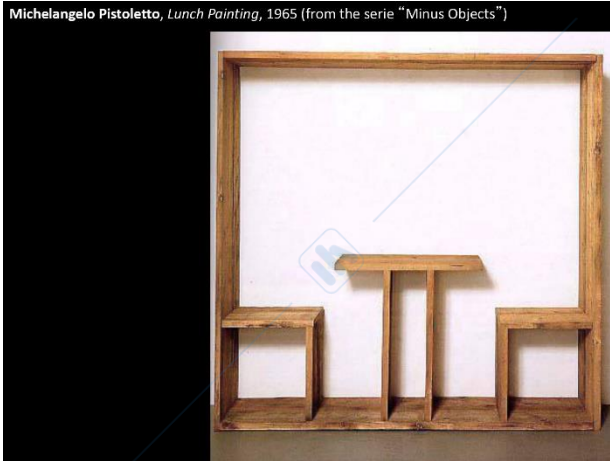
environment. If you stand in front of the plate, it reflects yourself; you find yourself inside an environment that is the same in which you are (like if it was a mirror), but you also find yourself in a kind of strange company with someone. Impolitely, this person is showing you his/her back. You don't really feel comfortable about the situation, you have to think what you do in there. It is a very strange experience. Most of us, because we feel uncomfortable in that situation, usually step aside. If you step aside, you go out from the framed mirrored environment. Precisely as the photographer did in this case, the picture shows that the photographer is not in the axis of the painting (otherwise we would have seen the photographer and the camera inside the painting). So, the typical action is to step aside. Explaining this, Pistoletto says: "After each action, I take a step aside and do not proceed in the direction shown by my object. A predetermined direction is contrary to human freedom, out of the system that goes straight. Predetermined means affect the future. To walk by taking a step aside leads out of the system that goes straight. The race among individuals becomes parallel. There are no more good and less good, because everyone is what it is and does what it does, and it becomes easy to communicate without language structures. It is easy to figure out who everyone is and how everyone is." You see behind this stainless-steel plate there is a whole philosophy, and a whole politics (philosophy of social relations) according to the professor. All these artists are fundamentally politically committed.

Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Venus of Rags*, 1967



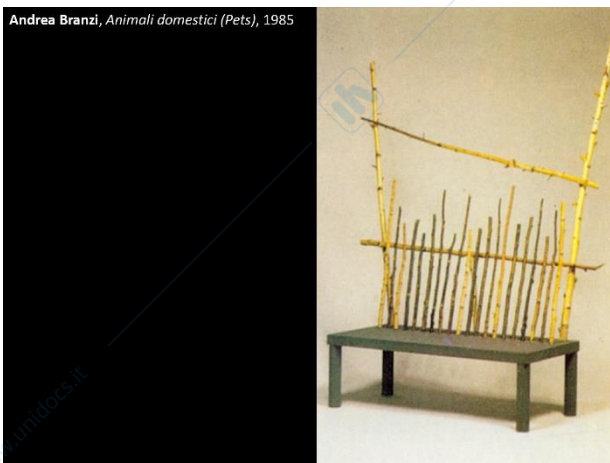
Again, Pistoletto in this case is investigating on the notion of beauty. There is this white beautiful woman (copy of a Greek statue representing Aphrodite of Venus=image of women beauty according to classical language). She cases this big bunch of rags that come from normal people, that have been thrown away, that describe normal lives. With all this variety of colours and forms, the question is about beauty. What is more beautiful between the Venus and the bunch of rags? The idealise beauty of

the Greeks or the shapeless bunch of rags coming from everyday life and belonging to each one of us? Each one of us can answer and find his/her own way to beauty.



We can recognise this strange object in the Politecnico di Milano. This is the original one and it is called Lunch Painting. It is a series of object investigating on the social rituals that link each other: the ritual of eating together: With a very simple wooden frame and two elements that describe the chairs and table, we reproduce this typical ritual of having food together. It is extremely effective because you don't need to have people sit in these chairs; they are there, it is precisely the shape of the framework that makes it having its own life. It is a very powerful element. As it usually happens with designers, we copied the shape and transformed it into a kind of public furniture or equipment suitable for everyday working in the school of Design of the Politecnico di Milano. The very high questions that are behind the original object have been somehow reduced to a simple everyday life of the school. Professor thinks this is the power of the art and it is still effective, although he is not sure if Pistoletto would be happy having a look at Polimi's interpretation.

Conceptual art was very important also in the design field. Precisely in the same period, authors like Sottsass, Branzi and Mendini produced design works that were asking the same questions: investigating on the same issues instead of looking at the fields of the arts and design.



This is a quite famous example called Pets. It is a series of armchairs and sofas. It is the combination of two different elements: the seat comes directly out from IKEA and the back is made of rough wood. It is a combination of pure industrial production and nature. In these strange conflicting elements, there is an attempt of providing us with an answer about the question: what is design?



The Proust Armchair by Alessandro Mendini is a process, not a product. What it is interesting, meaningful in this object is the process. The original armchair is an industrial product. There are firms that still produce these strange armchairs in a late-baroque style because there is a request in the market for this kind of armchairs. Mendini bought the armchair and then painted the chair with an interesting, coloured pattern that was kept from a painting by Seurat (an impressionist painter). It is a pointillist style. It is a blow up of a detail of a painting that then was put painted by hand on the surface of the armchair. This is the result. In the end, you don't understand anymore where the border is, the limit, the pressure between mechanical

It is a blow up of a detail of a painting that then was put painted by hand on the surface of the armchair. This is the result. In the end, you don't understand anymore where the border is, the limit, the pressure between mechanical

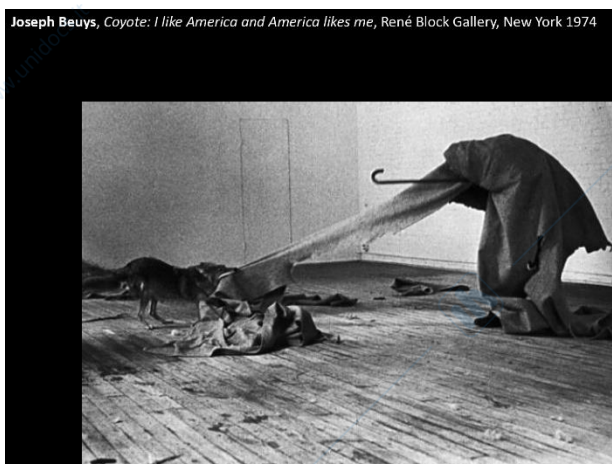
production (what machines make) and what the designer makes by hands. Again, it is an investigation on the meaning of design.

This was the last slide about conceptual art.

In the same years, many artists started using their own body as a mean of communication according fundamentally to two main strategies: using the body as an actor would do (producing performances) or using their body as it is (as an object containing meanings that you have to understand).



Joseph Beuys is a German artist of the time, a very important artist in the 1960s and 70s. His biography is in a certain sense, the biography of Germany in the second half of the century. He himself represents the drama of being a German in that period, after the World War II. In a certain sense, he becomes a priest, a magician, keeping the guilty of the German people on his shoulders and trying to dissipate this guilty. He was a pilot during the World War II, so he used to drive aircrafts. He was involved in the war against Russia and his airplane crashed right in the middle of Russia during the war. A family of Russian people rescued him, kept him in their own house and took care of him. He survived. They used natural elements like honey and for this reason, when he went back to Germany, he decided to become an artist and focus on the relationship between artificial society and nature trying to find a new way of existing we as humans in the world, looking at natural elements (or nature in general) from a completely different perspective. He was not only an artist, but he was also one of the founders of the political movement we now call: The Green. He was very much involved in society and not only in the arts. Professor shows us because Beuys decided to always wear a hat saying "I am like an animal; animals have their own features. You can't imagine a bird without wings, can't imagine a deer without horns. I am animal, my feature is the hat. I am a man with a hat."

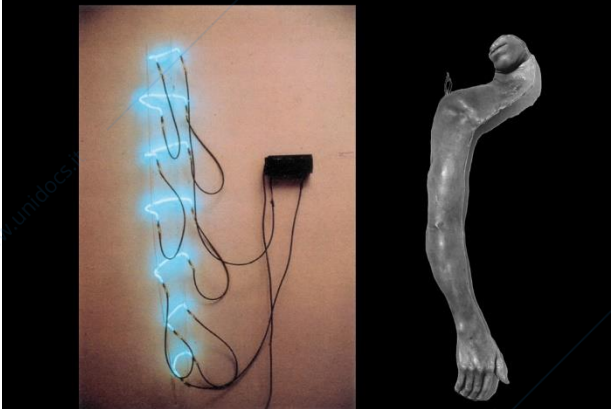


Here you see him using his body. This is the typical performance in René Block Gallery in New York, and it is called I like America and America likes me. He is inside the room with a Coyote. A Coyote is a typical American animal, and it is a wild animal. So, the poor Coyote is not accustomed to share the space with a human being, and it is very aggressive in the beginning (see picture). Beuys stays there for days trying to calm the Coyote down, and in the end (more than a week after) the Coyote understands that the man is armless, and seats close to Joseph Beuys in peace. It is a kind of metaphor of the way with which you should find a new balance between ourselves (civilised human beings) and wild nature.

Joseph and Wenzel Beuys, *7000 Oaks*, Documenta VII, Kassel 1982-1987

This is another quite famous performance: *7000 Oaks*. Here you see Joseph Beuys and his son, Wenzel. They simply plant trees in a city. The general program was to plant 1000 oaks in the city of Kassel. The reason why they chose Kassel is precisely because it is in the centre of the so-called Federal German Republic. It is very famous because there is a huge Volkswagen factory and also because they have an art exhibition that takes place each 4 years (Documenta).

This is the most famous art exhibition in Germany since 1955, when there was the first edition of Documenta. In the 7th edition, in 1982, Beuys and his son started planting the first oak in front of this beautiful neoclassical building that is the main building in which Documenta takes place, and then they went on planting oaks around the city. It is not so different from what the major of Milan Giuseppe Sala wants to do (he wanted to plant 10.000 trees in Milan to make it greener). This was a strategy that the arts, and particularly this kind of very committed art by Joseph Beuys, were doing in the 1980s. The very meaning is: the artist is not someone who simply works for the market (art market), but someone how is an actor in city politics. There is also an art side because in the art market, this process of 7000 oaks is very well known: art collectors bought the trees and Joseph Beuys plant them, filling up and signing a certificate. The art collector could exhibit a certificate that he was involved in the process because he bought one of the trees. What is meaningful and valuable in the market is precisely the certificate; you can buy and sell this certificate in the art market. There is always one side that is about the artist as a public man, and the other side about the artist involved in the art market.

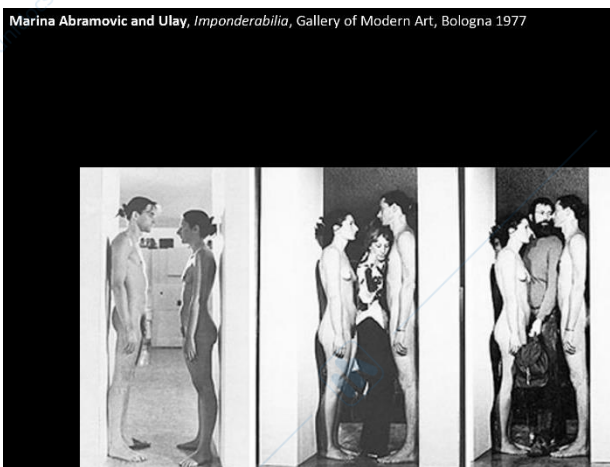
Bruce Nauman, *Neon templates of the left half of my body taken at ten inches intervals*, 1966
Bruce Nauman, *From Hand to Mouth*, 1967

Bruce Nauman is probably one of the most interesting American artists at the moment. In these two art pieces he is trying to investigate not the body in its performative qualities but rather the body itself, trying to find out a better knowledge of how we are. In the first picture on the left we don't even understand what we are talking about; it is a strange sculpture hanging on the wall, but if we read the title we can understand that is a series of sections of Bruce Nauman's body taken at 10 inches

intervals. In the lower part half of the shape of a leg, then the chest and then in the upper part half the left part of his head. It is a way of thinking about body from a different perspective and get new knowledge on how we are made. In the right part of the slide, there is another very interesting art piece. It is the reproduction of Bruce Nauman's arm, and it connected the right hand to his mouth; describes the relationship between the hand and the mouth, which is fundamental for each one of us. It connects the ability of making things with our ability to communicate. There was a very famous French palaeontologist in the 1950s named André Leroi-Courhan who precisely investigated the development of mankind in the relationship between our ability of making things with the hands and the ability of developing the language (the way in which we communicate). He discovered, step by step, the way in which the humans have developed this ability and became "sapiens" species.



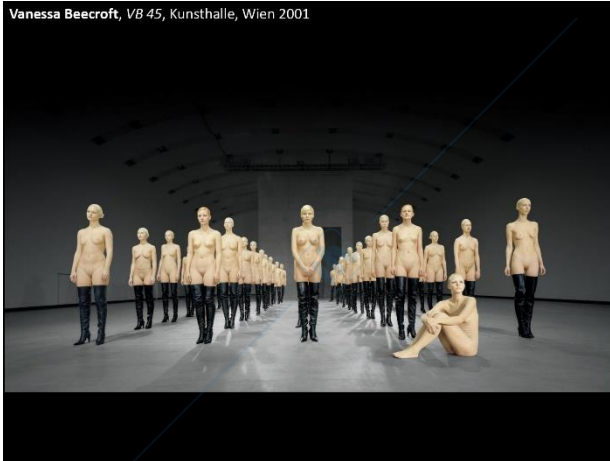
to use hands as we normally do. Again, attempts to understand the very meaning of some parts of our body that we usually consider "normal tools".



This is another very famous performance by Marina Abramovic and the then boyfriend, Ulay. This performance was in Bologna, in the Gallery of Modern Art in 1977. It is called *Imponderabilia* (word from Latin, is to understand things, the relevance of habits we have without thinking. Habits that deal with our culture. The way with which we act in front of bodies). The performance works like this: many people are invited to the Gallery of Modern Art in an evening. They simply tell them there will be a performance by these two artists, but visitors don't know exactly what the performance will be. They find themselves in the main lobby, and there is a door. Standing and facing each other in this door, the visitors find the two artists completely in the nude and you see there is a very narrow passage between the two bodies. The only way to enter the main hall is to cross this kind of threshold. The visitors have to choose which one of the two face while passing the narrow passage. It is very embarrassing because it deals with cultural habits.

[Professor plays a video about the performance.]

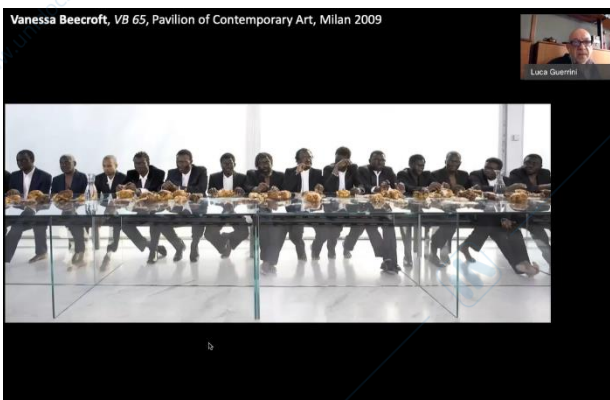
What it is interesting if you look at it completely, at the very beginning people don't really know what to do; they are a bit embarrassed crossing this strange narrow passage. At the very beginning, not many cross the passage and then, the more and more people get accustomed to this process and in the end there are so many people that want to cross the passage that it is difficult for Marina Abramovic and Ulay to stand still. It is a very interesting experiment in the field of anthropology and sociology, about our cultural habits and the way we interpret a naked body.



Naked bodies are also at the very centre of the research by other much younger contemporary artists, such as Vanessa Beecroft. Specially she is interested in understanding the cultural value of woman body; the way with which culture interprets the meaning of women's body. Her performances involve a large number of people. Here you see an example. We are in Wien, in 2001. There are more or less 40 beautiful young girls, completely in the nude and wearing these high leather boots. A naked woman wearing high leather boots represents the idea of the dominant woman in sexual affairs. In fact, we are in Wien, which was the city of the mackies? of Masoch, from which the word masochism comes from. What we are watching are not real women but rather a cultural interpretation of human body. They do almost nothing; they simply stand still. They have very slow and small movement (as moving the hand from one leg to the other) and people simply look at this group of women in the centre of the hall.



This is another very famous performance: VB 52, firstly performed in Turin, is about food; the relationship between food and women, which is very complex and contradictory. Most of women are always on diet, they always have problems with weight, so they have a very conflictual and contradictory relationship with food because at the same time, women feed children. In this performance you can see all these beautiful women sat around this beautiful glass table eating healthy food like vegetable and fruit juice very slowly. From this we learn how contradictory is their relationship with food and the universe of women.



The same table was used for a very famous performance in Milan. It was the first time Vanessa Beecroft involved men instead of women in one of her performances. This is a picture, in the Pavilion of Contemporary Art in Milan. There are 22 men, all immigrants and most of them from Africa. You see all of them dressed in a black suit, with a white shirt eating roasted chicken. The people around simply look at them eating, and there is no possibility of any kind of

communication between the public and the migrants. Again, there is this social problem displayed, which was and is so strong still in our Italian society: how to integrate different people from different cultures. The meaning is a very simple ritual: that of eating. By the way, it is evident there is a strong relationship between the way in which these men are sat on a line in front of the table and the very famous last supper by Leonardo, that is one of the most famous

masterpieces showcased in Santa Maria delle Grazie, in Milan. In this particular case, there is also a strong link with the history of the city and the Italian tradition.

In the next lesson, professor will talk about video art (same PDF).