

UNIVERSITA' DEGLI STUDI DI SALERNO
Dipartimento di Filosofia



ARTMEDIA X – PARIS

Éthique, esthétique, communication technologique ou le destin du sens
Etica, estetica, comunicazione tecnologica : il destino del senso
Ethics, esthetics, techno-communication: the future of meaning

International Colloquium
12th – 13th December, 2008

Friday, 12th December, 2008, BNF, auditorium, Mauriac site
Saturday, 13th December, 2008, INHA, auditorium

Conception and co-organization

Mario Costa, Professor, University of Salerno
Fred Forest, Professor Emeritus, University of Nice

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Begun 25 years ago, **ARTMEDIA** will bring its work to a conclusion with its tenth edition international colloquium, under the direction of Mario Costa and Fred Forest. The colloquium will take place in Paris on Friday, 12th December at the Mauriac site of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF) and Saturday, 13th December, 2008 in the auditorium of the Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art (INHA). Leonardo/Olats is responsible for the colloquium website and the online publication of the proceedings. The Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (INA) and L'Harmattan are the publishers of the print edition of the proceedings. Video recordings of the presentations will be made available at the BNF and the INA. The Bibliothèque Nationale de France and the Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art proudly support the scientific mission of this exceptional event.

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We have called upon specialists from many different fields to offer their reflections at a wide-ranging colloquium whose specific themes have been deliberately left open in order to give each participant full freedom to offer his or her own unique points of reference. It should be noted, however, that the general theme of the colloquium encompasses a number of issues that have been examined in one way or another by Artmedia since its inception. Indeed, the issues that have been at the core of each of the nine preceding editions of Artmedia can all be placed under the general heading of ***the relationship between ethics and aesthetics***. These topics of investigation and critical reflection have yet to be exhausted and remain open-ended. It is our intention to wrap up our work at Artmedia by focusing our attention on a general theme of critical importance to the present and future evolution of art in our society.

« Supposing that there is such a thing as art, then where is the proof of its influence, the tangible proof of any influence *whatsoever* on its part? » asked Nietzsche in 1878 (*Human, All Too Human*, I, 22). Forty years later, Gabo, one of the artists most imbued with the spirit of modernity, wondered: « What contribution does art make to the current era of human history? » (*Manifesto of Realism*, 1920). More recently, a great public controversy in France near the end of the 1990s called contemporary art into question—a controversy whose chief merit was to once again raise the same sort of questions. Nonetheless, before we go off in search of hypothetical proof of art's « influence » we must first bluntly ask an equally radical question:

What does art matter in our world?

A question of this order has been raised numerous times with respect to modern art (Ortega, Berdyaev, Sedlmayr, Thode, Bloch, Ellul...) and continues to be raised even more frequently in our day in reference to contemporary art by critics (Baudrillard, Virilio, Clair, Hartford..., and even more recently by Michel Gauthier, in *Fresh Théorie*, II, 2006 and Elisabeth Wetterwald in *20/27*, n.1, 2007) who have gone as far as to describe it in terms of « vapidity, » « solitude, » « absence, » « nothingness, » « nullity »....

Indeed, what do the “quasi-pathological” workings of the art market and the broader “art system” matter to the 2 million artists worldwide who inhabit the terrain of contemporary art in light of the various theoretical positions that prompt us to rethink the history of art

(Belting, Danto...)? What does the upheaval caused by so many new technologies, and by the artists who work with them, matter? What do the vast sums of money invested in contemporary art by public institutions on the basis of the speculated present and future worth of works matter? Should we, like Gabo, simply keep asking what contribution art—in this case, « contemporary art »—makes to the current era of human history? What does the ethics of social responsibility matter to the increasingly cynical “system” that has filled our public spaces with the dubious output of contemporary art, all with the help of taxpayer money? In a time when cynicism and business as usual have spoiled and rendered obsolete our quaint idea of democracy, ***what potential does artistic practice still have restore life and meaning to the public arena?***

Furthermore, is it true that the products and practices making use of new technologies have the potential to open up new frontiers for the rejuvenation of art? Is one to believe that esthetic and ethical tensions will be resolved solely by virtue of better communication, as the promoters of networked products and practices seem to suggest?

Do today’s artists still have the capacity to symbolize, which has always been seen as one of the most basic functions of art?

Ultimately, does meaning still matter in our world?

The time has come to think more deeply about such issues and to ask ourselves big questions in which the esthetic, the ethical, the pragmatic, and the philosophical are inextricably bound together.

With this final edition in December 2008, nearly 25 years after its creation (May 1985), Artmedia intends to solidify its historical status as the first and the foremost scholarly forum dedicated to exploring the relationship between techno-science, philosophy, and esthetics—a status to which it lays claim on the basis of the intellectual rigor and prestige of its successive editions over the years and the number of its international participants:

- Artmedia has gained an international reputation, not to mention the longstanding support of many foreign universities via its affiliation with the University of Salerno;
- the preceding edition, Artmedia VIII (November 2002), was held in very prestigious venues in Paris (Le Centre National du Commerce Extérieur and L’Ecole Normale Supérieure) and benefited from the sponsorship of numerous international institutions (www.olats.org/projetpart/artmedia/2002/mono_index.php). It involved the participation of fifty artists and theorists from around the world and received broad coverage in the media (a special edition of the journal « Art Press » published the texts of the papers presented and « Ligeia », a French CNRS-affiliated art journal with an international readership, also published its proceedings);
- a large number of articles appeared in the French and Italian press, the multilingual online bibliography was particularly rich, a video recording of the entire proceedings is now in the archives of the INA (National Audiovisual Institute) and is also available to researchers and students at the BNF.

Finally, the latest and final edition of Artmedia, in December 2008, is certain to garner much attention due to the timely nature of its theme and the excellent reputation of the scholars who are participating in it. Its success will surely be saluted by the international

community of scholars and intellectuals. Its contributions to critical thinking and further research come at a time of exceptional visibility in Europe and promise to reflect most favorably on the image of the institutions that have contributed to its organization.

Historical Note : The organizers wish to recognize the related series of fifty seminars on topics like technological and communication art, the uses of the Internet, and the Esthetics of Communication that were organized between 1985 and 1994 by Professor Fred Forest (holder of a state doctorate from the Sorbonne, formerly professor at the Ecole Supérieure Nationale de Cergy, professor emeritus at University of Nice Sophia-Antipolis) and held at the University Paris I-Sorbonne, the University of Paris VIII, the University of Nice, and Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Nice (MAMAC).