

Michelangelo Pistoletto

Image

1989

The dimension of the works in this exhibit is constituted by the distance that separates them from my previous photographic blowups of 1969. Those earlier pieces were gigantic photos of my "Minus Objects" which were produced and photographed as of 1965. Now, in 1989, I have created blowups of my "Volumes", which were produced and photographed as of 1985.

Not only do these two dates each mark the end of a decade: they also stake off a full score of years. The present show, entitled "Immagine" (Image), is part of "Anno Bianco" (White Year), which I opened with a first announcement in January 1989. Hence, it is a point in the network of events that give my oeuvre the form of time.

Visiting the show in a gallery is like leafing through a catalogue or an art magazine, page by page. The works that once invaded their environment have now been flattened, printed, and aligned along the walls. They have been transformed into image. This is a clear and inevitable condition. Art creates image. Even if it does not want to. Even if it does not want to be representational. The techniques of information and diffusion inexorably spark the transformation of the work into an image, whatever the latter may be.

This phenomenon implicitly and automatically has a twofold consequence: the mythification of the artistic product and the consumption of that product. The modern media perpetuate the myth of art and also determine the transcendence of that myth. Hence, the duality that decrees the life or death of art has become the crucial coincidence of factors that recurs instant after instant.

And since art lives in the complex structure of civilization, it strikes me as obvious that the same phenomenon turns up in society.

Although it could easily be a weakness, an unsettling symptom, it actually constitutes the strength of Western civilization, because the latter has fashioned its own cultural and economic growth within the continual recurrence of its own image.

The image has always constituted the detachment necessary for the re-creation of physical goods.

The civilization of the image is victorious on all fronts, so that it phagocytizes every other culture. This means that it can employ art such as to inflict death on anyone, and no one can avoid becoming an image. The iconoclasm that now take refuge in artistic abstraction and artistic revolt that take refuge in iconoclasm they all operate on a univalent level; hence, they are unable to put up any effective resistance to the power of bivalent art.

Word becomes image, sign becomes image, architecture becomes image, color becomes image, flight from image becomes image.

Image is therefore both one thing and the other. In the past it could appear univalent when it avoke a single dogma, a single aspect of things, a single factor on a fresco, a painting, a statue. But now that the painting has become a mirror, there is no doubt about it: it is bivalent.

If abstraction and image coincide in my "Mirror Paintings", just like concept and reality; if my "Mirror Paintings" perpetuate the process of the self-creation and self-consumption of the image, as well of time and space, then iconoclasms also find the path of exit (or entrance) in the "Mirror Paintings" appropriating the minor, first as material, then as a bivalent medium. By becoming photographs, the volumes of my "Fourth Generation" continue the process, turning it back to the interior of art, they make it their own, they reflect the reality of art by coinciding with the methods of the world. Without being translated into windows facing the outside.

In my opinion, the critical scope has to integrate into the lucidity of vision and the ability to decompose, divide, slice up, and multiply the levels, thereby making the density of history feasible and the open space in the new dimension traversible.

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