

Simone Mussat Sartor: EXIT-01, a reflection

The video procedure of filming 'by reflection', experimented for the first time on October 4, 2001 during EXIT-01, gave Simone Mussat Sartor the opportunity to intervene, first directly and then afterward, on the form of an event (prepared, organized, and implemented by him, together with the other protagonists) with a seemingly impersonal modality.

Two video cameras were placed on two trestles, each at a different point in space – but pointing in the same direction, both shooting the same thing – so as to be able to work *independently*, without the physical presence of the author behind the lens. They are not aimed towards the public, but film the image reflected on a plexiglas plate, thus recording what happens *behind* each of them.

This aspect reveals the very *personal* and subjective nature of Mussat Sartor's work, consisting of an actual *spying*. In fact, spying is looking at someone or something in an indirect, inadvertent way, thus transforming a habitual action, to which we are accustomed, into an anomalous and disturbing gesture, and therefore, literally, a creative one. The same placement of each of the two plexiglas plates (60 x 60 cm) is typical of who is spying: one is very high, rather hidden, and the other is low, placed on the ground, also outside the attention level of the gaze with respect to the events, but closer to them, at times grazed or even touched by the feet of the people present that evening. But, it must be said, the action of the video cameras clearly takes place 'in plain view', in a kind of discretely proposed complicity, because it is clear to anyone who is there that *something is happening* and nothing is hiding or disguising the presence and the action of the two recording devices: a very discrete presence and action, so as not to disturb the naturalness and spontaneity of the people filmed.

The ambiguity of the term 'reflection', when it refers simultaneously to the physical phenomenon and the activity of/in the mind *after* the event to remember it, re-creating it by choosing from the entire mass of the shots to extrapolate the exceptional, memorable moments, well defines the sense of Mussat Sartor's work. This second phase of the working process activates a decisive trigger between the neutrality of the shots and the subjectivity of the assembled work in its definitive form, according to how the author crystallizes his intimate feelings, memories, and desires in the individual random moments, directly or indirectly connected to the EXIT-01 events. On the other hand, the fact that while making a selection he respects the exact chronology of the events filmed, and their link with the various moments of that evening (the performance by actor Michele Di Mauro; the diffusion of the sounds of an acoustic sculpture by Paolo Piscitelli; the sudden appearance at a window in the house opposite of the accordionist Beppe Turletti playing popular festive music; then the waiting, which turned out to be in vain, for the intervention by Steve Roden in a live webcast from Florida; finally the convivial moment, which involved all those present and lasted until late at night), guarantees the right balance between the reality of the event and its memory, and each of those present can recognize themselves by activating in turn a personal process of reflection. In the final draft of the work, divided into three successive replays, slightly differentiated by progressive overlays, two other intentions, two other fundamental levels, are also clearly outlined. The first, prior to filming, consists in the desire to bring to the fore, keeping it in the electronic memory of the file, a fact so common as to have lost almost every curiosity and interest for us: people who go to a place (in this case, the gallery) to attend an event as spectators. This fact is less trivial than it appears, because with their mere presence, these people can interfere in the event itself, conditioning it and even creating it (or helping to create it) in part. Therefore Mussat Sartor aims his focus not so much on the event (the various performances, present only in an indirect and partial way) but on the other aspect, complementary to that: precisely the spectators/actors.

The second level is inherent in the sphere of the subject-author, and occurs, that is to say, it becomes manifest afterward, gradually becoming clearer from the first to the third section.

This successive overlap of images shot during the selection and editing work gives shape to a silent poetic declaration: the brief but intense light of the embers of a cigarette – a prelude to its disappearance from the frame – and the cold, apparently static flame of a candle, a vision that concludes the film, are extraneous images, taking place after the October 4th event. Which however become fixed in the memory of the viewer of the video, distancing it temporally to a much greater extent than the short space of days (seven) that passed between the event and the making of the film.

Simone Mussat Sartor, through the lens of the two videocameras, saw and recorded everything that happened with the neutral loyalty of the technical means. What remains in the short film is truly his, captured in a synthesis filtered by memory, and now woven forever into the vision of those images – the cigarette embers and the candle flame – that appeared later, in the moment of his reflecting and remembering.

Carlo Fossati, 2001