

The Infections
(An image of the exterior)

When in May 1974 Joseph Beuys carried out the Coyote project (I love America and America loves me) to celebrate the opening of the René Block Gallery in New York - twenty years ago, as with almost everything, in the words of the poet- something happened, which was to become a capital and emblematic experience in order to gain a fitting idea of the complexity of the creative thought of the artist: the sweeping influence of his work on an international level was centred principally on Europe, and the range of his projects and ideas stretched unstoppable towards all the territories concerning the human being, with the construction of his history and the areas associated with his general condition, both from the sphere of the subject and from the boundaries of the individual, both from the domain of privacy and from the social field. Coyote, in the sense, transcended the mere formal resolutions in so far as that a powerful action/installation and as a system of symbolic elements, to appeal directly to the sphere of relations between man and animals in so far as a cultural stage is concerned, to the idea of a wound in civilization, to the unjustified change in the traditions of subjugated people, and to the collision between cultures, when in contrast, according to the artist, there should be support for trans-cultural migrations which are more productive and enriching for the parties concerned, ideas, on the other hand, very much in line with his well-know and profound pantheistic thoughts. With Coyote Beuys constructs a formidable metaphor, both of the degradation of life -above all of those related to the spheres of nature- and the archetypal version that the colonizing devastation has supposed in the consideration, for example of an animal revered by the Indians it became the representation of the sly robbery and the carrion cunning for the white man, a duality which, together with other attributes of mythical order, appear masterfully narrated and linked together by Léve-Strauss in the fascinating “Histoire de Lynx”. So again, a discourse of power exemplifying itself under new formalizations, and sweeping symbolic machinery initiated in order to refer to the world from art creating a system of reciprocal relations and affectations. Some of the latest works of Darya von Berner - those impressive “interventions in situ”, as she herself calls them, carried out in the spaces of the galleries, in unusual proportions and scales (as if to make even more obvious the ostentatious inversion of the hierarchy in the recent relation between man and animal), enormous objects of powerful memory and of indelible visual, emotional and aesthetic impact- give, in advance and not only through their express physical singularities, a profound tribute to the before mentioned action by Beuys: *Lupus Viator*, for example, recognizing its own peculiarities, in as much that it is a specific project of a pictorial image which is very significant which runs in stages and unstoppable through the heart of old Europe, from Pescara to Zaragoza, supposes the celebration on the part of the artist not of the birth or the death of the author, but of an idea, that is to say, that is fundamentally about the commemoration of a very significant art produced by Beuys and whose transcendence undoubtedly would have to feed the minds and souls of hundreds of artist throughout the world for whom the artistic act did not consist -nor consists- only of formalizing specific questions of artistic order, but the

notion of engagement which covered many more fields, of which the mere pseudo-compromised militancy sometimes appears to want to reduce the term. In that, the work of Darya von Berner, in which the final sense of art passes through questions situated far beyond the frontiers which the very discipline habitually with respect to the formal established practice. The work of Darya von Berner, far from being a conservationist thesis or from being an idea of balance in nature with respect to the position of simple being a critical defense -perhaps we should consider this problematic secular relation of art with nature, traditional subject of speculation in the territory of art and thought since the early mists of romanticism-, promotes the reconsideration of man's relation with his environment, by means of a work, like art, profoundly rooted in the domains of sensitivity, it is clear, and directly connected to both the aesthetic and intellectual experience, a work then, which resorts to some formal inherited registers of previous expressive systems and to the recapitulation about the significant components of a contemporary work of art, that is to say a work which wants to place its discourse around the axis which oscillates between the artistic production codified by centuries of painting and the reflexive and compromise thought which has impregnated art since the dawn of the vanguardists. Perhaps here we should think about the significant evolution process of the painting of Darya von Berner with respect to strict figure presences: from their beginnings in the area of urban scenery, through the images of natural scenery as a product of her stay in Paris up to the present series of animals, of which she does not show us more than amplified fragments at inhuman scales and deprived, in principle, of an ambient context. It is about a process in which the thematic and the figure repertoire have only continues to built this world of "natural" relations closer and closer to man and, in consequence, to the spectator. The work of the artist resorts presently to what we generically call the animal image, used from a symbolic standpoint, like a powerful referential element which promotes reflection and invites us to consider the role of these symbols in our culture, symbols which seem to live forgotten or buried in our collective subconscious. But Darya von Berner does don't want to become a rescuer of values but a weaver of spells, a catalyst of effects, that is to say, a little like Joseph

Beuys (or as in the work of the analyst, a constructor, similarly, of an autonomous text), offering sufficient elements so that the spectator is the one who discovers the interpretation of the matter, the one who can build his own discourse on the subject, thinking that the lines drawn between art and context are increasingly blurred, and that the binomial reality/fiction can give us little help. It must be added that the artistic factor contributes, as just one more element, to this task, given that the artist pours all available energy in this direction: the ephemeral, monumentalist and epoch-making character of the work only provides even more conceptual and interpretative registers for its objective, as it gives the work spatial and process characteristics which free it from painting by putting forward new questions and by affecting more the conceptual areas of artistic activity. Perhaps the manifestly ephemeral nature of the installation -the fact that the enormous painted murals created expressively for each exhibition disappear after the closure of that exhibition is- one of the most significant elements when we come to consider the work as a profound reflection on time, on the course of events and, with that, a metaphorical call,

for example, to the species of animals which disappear with the passage of time- a clearwenderian connotation- ever faster, more cruel and more forgotten, as if it were some sort of insistence based on a certain solidarity with the real time, limits under the threat of which endangered species live. But this does not seem to be the central theme, although it is presented to us charged with undeniable relevance: if we referred earlier to the work of the artist trying to obviate its considerable time-based character, not so much for its alleged fidelity as a register or chronicle but more in the way in which it is in tune with some of the fundamental preoccupations to the presentation of Darya von Berner's painting, and make the question one of a certain "otherness", associating itself with the strategies of the subject and individual, in the public and private spaces, appealing subtly yet constantly to the idea of the memory as a substrata which permeates the works, like a presence which remains adhered to each one of the works, like the substance of which, sometimes, dreams are made. It is the artist who has established on occasion the relation between man and animal, from a defined perspective not now by absence -That the animal perhaps represents (or is) all that, man is not but- through a reflex, as if it constituted the spirit of a certain other, in a tangible game of throw backs and directional resources, undoubtedly related to those powerful mechanism of subject associates with a specific social context and not all gratifying on the other hand- the notion of contagion appears equally implicit and that idea of unexpected and unwanted death, that death which comes not as an individual westernized death but as collective social death. As with recent and often inexorable forms of contamination and contagion, the implacable passage of time brings with it the seed of disappearance and extermination, almost by definition, and both for animal species and people affected by contemporary pandemics, equally significant, equally metaphorical: here, then like an unproved hypothesis and as an exemplification of a clearly time based nature, is the first terrible metaphor for equally terrible times. But although the work of Darya von Berner brings some connotations of a distant and fatalist nature with regard to the possible metaphorical touches, or perhaps even for that reason, the message enters the chapter of artistic production with full honor like a powerful sensorial production mechanism, which preserves some of the most representative problems of the current artistic scene intact, all the while incorporating new traits from the field of historic speculation and thought: the idea of solidarity with the outside, the reproduction inside of those exteriors, the notion of reproductability, the disproportion of scales. The ephemeral character of presentation, a plausible denial of the art business, a certain spirit which de-objectives the work, the symbolic vocation inherente in the animal repertoire, the strongly metaphorical value of the colors, the cloak of memory, the continuity of manuality in the pictorial work as an equally extinguishable correlation, the compromise of the artist as an individual and as a subject, the problems arising from the presentation, and all that which refers to the work of art as a place, a space and time in which are revealed and shown, as in the "La invención de Morel" by Bioy Casares, the mediums of range and retention, the emblems of a type of modern contemplation.

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