

CHAPTER VI

A CLOSE READING OF "PLEXUS BLACK BOX"

The researcher in this final chapter offer an emic understanding of "Plexus Black Box" as an open multi-form art project. In coherence with employed interpretational strategies, reported in Chapter III, he identified non feasible for this inquiry to terminate with a lone-point perspective conclusion. The openness of the subject matter under inquiry as well as its nature of a still ongoing project required a "multi-point perspective" contribution.

As his contribution to the continuation of this collective art project, the researcher in Chapter VI offers a multi-points perspective understanding by presenting as direct quotes positions of "insider" experiences identified aesthetically relevant by following the hermeneutical procedures reported in Chapter III.

Therefore no attempt was made by researcher to make a formal analysis of art works related to "Plexus Black Box."

The researcher from "insider" recollections by Plexus participants, as it is reported in Chapter IV, and from his emic account reported in Chapter V, derives a multi-perspectival emic understanding of "Plexus Black Box", grounded etically by hermeneutical procedures in an intersubjective knowledge.

This collective emic understanding allowed the researcher to look at the object of the study from many inside and outside points of view which all together supplied the necessary "refracted" social lens (as a methodological

tool) through which to understanding larger social components related to the community-based nature of the art project under study.

"Plexus Black Box" was reopened to be investigated on a scholarly basis. The cultural patrimony within was shared with all "insider" participants by using the model of "the artist as researcher", and by employing an emic behaviour. "The Box" never was fully closed, but this re-opening for academic reasons allowed many people to be aware of what was/is/will be contained in the Box, including their own experiences, and to express their concern about "inside" and "outside" positions.

Jacques Derrida in Positions, argues about the polarity outside and inside as follows:

The "dialectics" of the same and the other, of outside and inside, of the homogeneous and the heterogeneous, are, as you know, among the most contorted ones. The outside can always become again an *object* in the polarity subject/object, or the reassuring reality of what is outside the text; and there is sometimes an "inside" that is as troubling as the outside may be reassuring. This is not to be overlooked in the critique of interiority and subjectivity. (67)

The researcher as an outside "insider" participant was aware that the task to be accomplished was among the "contorted" ones, because of the risk, as Derrida argues, within a too intellectual Western critique of the values of subjectivity and objectivity. He performed a double, two time, deconstructionist strategic move.

First, he "positioned" himself as an "outsider" reader of the "double writing" of Derrida wherein he explored the openness of the "double reading."

Second, at the left margin of the pages of Chapter IV, he positioned "insider" accounts, with no paragraphs indented if made from recorded interviews, to

give a sense of their flowing speech. Third, he wrote his parallel critical reading. These "double writing" and "double reading" acts are merging together and in turn are producing a multiplex and intense aesthetic experience which offer the possibility to grasp a *emic* participative understanding.

In 1994 "Plexus Black Box" was reopened for scholarly investigation. Artists from the "margins" of the Artworld have consciously participated in this inquiry. Participants and researcher were conscious of the interference of the inquiry in the "normal" life of Plexus and of its natural evolution.

This investigation interfered continuously with "normal" and free natural life of Plexus group, and in particular it manipulated artificially the "insider" identities and performances of "the artist as researcher" as well as "the coordinator" of the project under study .

At the end of this study, this artificial manipulation and split of "insider" identities originated that kind of "*emic*" result that was aspected to be produced by a scholarly conducted research.

The "contorted" experience of the "insider" scholar David W. Ecker has played a seminal role in the growing of a general sense of confidence and genuine understanding among participants of different background.

His *emic* knowledge gained "in the first person" on the field research of this study as a Plexus participant as well as chairperson of this Dissertation Committee has offered an unique way to know from inside and outside problems and participants directly linked to these problems.

His following "insider" account provides an example of how it is possible but not simple to gain from *emic* procedures an *etic* understanding:

I was not part of the original group which started Plexus. I was introduced to Plexus through Angiola Churchill and I served as adviser of Sandro Dernini. At certain point in 1990 I got involved because of my interest in the living traditions of art in Sardinia and since then I have participated in 3-4 Plexus events.

Plexus for me is a coalition of artists, engaged in different ways with many divergent modes with art, coming together to work on short term projects without any unifying agreement on political or philosophical meanings on Plexus, without any unifying terms beforehand. Over this time my grasp of events ranged from a total misunderstanding or a total confusion completely not understanding or a total confusion of what is happening just like everybody else to some sense of direction and that is what you can expect from it. Periodically everybody felt confused and each role got confused. On other occasions I felt I understood what was happening.

The emic knowledge produced by the study reinforced the beliefs of the Plexus participants, who turned to be more conscious as members of an ongoing international collaborative effort. This new emerging awareness, gained through the process of the "double writing" and "double reading" of this dissertation, allowed "insiders" to move themselves from their individual misunderstandings towards a collective overall understanding of the multifacets nature of Plexus. The emic knowledge, provided by a gathering of different "insider" understandings, has reinforced at the same time the study and the object of the study, and has re-activated "Plexus Black Box," to re-emerge after years of ifrozen performance activities.

The Plexus deconstructionist art process employed in the "double reading" allowed the artist as researcher to grasp, during the process, an emic understanding of the real possibility to have "insider" participants "participating" together with the researcher in this Chapter in presenting their undertandings.

Gadamer names "an interpretative participation," in The Hermeneutics of Suspicion, the process of interpretation, in which, as an "insider," the interpreter participates with her/his own specific historical angle of interpretation.

"Insider" "interpretative participations," collectively gathered, evolved in the critical hermeneutical process performed by the researcher into a global interconnected participation of the object of the study, not anymore as a passive body waiting its vivisectioning by the academy, but with all participants, objects and subjects equally recognized as part of the cultural art product.

Cultural identity and artistic reappropriation, which are current issues in art education, are important clues in the insider multicultural understanding of "Plexus Black Box," from which derives the researcher's hermeneutic interpretation as an emic interpretation of the participants' experiences coming from a multiplicity of levels of understandings, and bridging theory and practice, in a continuous hermeneutical process in evolution.

This gathering of emic accounts by Plexus participants shows how "Plexus Black Box" is interpreted as a community-based art project relating many events together.

The researcher as a multi-facet perspective presents direct "insider" experiences as primary sources" for an emic aesthetic understanding, through their experiences, of "Plexus Black Box," which at the same time provides a reflexive historical description of the birth and self-development of a community-based "open" and "auto-financed" art project.

"Plexus Black Box" originated as an object as well as a subject, both interdependent from each other and in a serendipitous manner from participants and environmental contingencies.

Schutz in Reflections on the Problem of Relevances points out:

In any case, there is an element of surprise inherent to the newly emergent and unanticipated relevances which supersede and cover the former set. Merton has applied the term "serendipity" to this phenomenon. It originated in the fact that all of our anticipations are necessarily empty unless fulfilled or annihilated by the subsequent events. (113)

Schutz further argues that

We believe that the answer can be found in the realm of the unknown (which we have described as a sub category of restorable knowledge), namely in the situation in which the formerly actual knowledge was not entirely lost but survives, although neutralized, modified, and covered by supervening knowledge. (155)

Plexus has many different conscious and unconscious facets, some are immediately present, others are "dormant" as Schutz argues further:

To begin with, not all the elements of the stock of knowledge are simply stored away for further use. Some are not "dormant" although it can be said that they are neutralized in a particular way. Some of these elements are permanently present and never released from grip, although they are not present within the kernel of the thematic field of consciousness, but always present in its margin. (143)

The study of "Plexus Black Box," by an "insider" of it, became an active part of the self-reflexive understanding and learning process of Plexus by all participants, who moving together from the margins of the kernel of the study supplied the artist as researcher with the necessary information to identify at the end of his study, at the metalevel of the Ecker and Kaelin's taxonomy, a survival metatheoretical tendency, which allowed margins to be centers and viceversa in endless creative process.

This survival metatheoretical shifting tendency is not easy to be identified because of the open shifting nature of the multifacet art project. Therefore with an open end, the artist as researcher present not a definitive understanding of "Plexus Black Box" but a critical contribution, moving from individual misunderstands to a collaborative understanding of a art

project which cannot be aesthetically "identified" by its formal art components.

The researcher, by applying Schutz's system of relevances, identified through the close reading of "insider" accounts identified the underlying theme

"In Order to Survive" as the creative Plexus survival unifying ground on which so many artists have converged together.

The community-based art project "Plexus Black Box" has its survival seed and roots in this open call. Therefore it is of paramount relevance for the understanding of the community-based cultural identity of project under study.

The relevance of this open call makes necessary for the researcher to fully report the following William Parker's text In Order to Survive which was performed as the open call statement at the street community event, which the "insider" Miguel Algarin in Chapter IV pointed out as the turning on of the volume of free mass participation shaping the aesthetic image of "Plexus Black Box:"

In Order to Survive, 1984, a Statement :

"We cannot separate the starving child from the starving musician, both things are caused by the same thing capitalism, racism and the putting of military spending ahead of human rights. The situation of the artist is a reflection of America's whole attitude towards life and creativity."

There was a period during the 1960's in which John Coltrane, Malcolm X, Duke Ellington, Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, Bill Dixon, Sun Ra, Martin Luther King and Albert Ayler were all alive and active.

Avant garde jazz contemporary improvised music coming out of the Afro-American was at a peak of creativity and motion. ABC Impulse was recording Coltrane and Archie Shepp, ESP Disk was recording the music of Albert Ayler, Sunny Murray, Sonny

Simmons, Giuseppe Logan, Noah Howard, Frank Wright, Marion Brown, Henry Grimes, Alan Silva and many other exponents of the music. Blue Note and Prestige Records were recording Andrew Hill, Eric Dolphy, Sam Rivers, Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry among others.

Radio stations such as WLIB now called BLS and WRVR which now plays pop music were both playing jazz 24 hours a day including some of the new music of Coltrane, Shepp, Ayler, and Ornette Coleman.

There was energy in the air as people marched and protested in the north and south demanding human rights, demanding that the senseless killing in Vietnam stop.

Simultaneously, like musicians before them the avant garde became aware of the necessity to break away from tradition business practices. Like musicians lives being in the hand of producers and nightclubs owners who only wish to make money and exploit the musician. The musicians began to produce their own concerts and put out their own records in order to gain more control over their lives. The Jazz Composers' Guild formed by Bill Dixon was one of the first musicians' organization in the 60's to deal with the self determination of the artist. Other efforts had been made by Charles Mingus, Sun Ra as they both had produced their own concerts and records in the 50's. To follow was the A.A.C.M. (Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians) formed about a year after the Jazz Composers' Guild, and Milford Graves, Don Pullen, record company SRP (Self Reliance Program).

Musicians got together with poets to put out a magazine called the Crickett, all the articles were written by poets and musicians themselves. It was edited by Imanu Baraka, Larry Neal, A.B. Spellman, advisors on the magazine were Milford Graves, Cecil Taylor and Sun Ra. Contributors included Roger Riggins, Stanley Crouch, Albert Ayler, and Ishmael Reed. The motto was "black Music in Evolution."

Just as the music and the movement began to break ground establishing itself, several things happened: Malcolm X was assassinated, Martin Luther King was assassinated, John Coltrane died, British rock and roll began to change the music industry. Not only could record be sold they could sell posters, books, wigs, dolls, and thousands of electric guitars to the youth of America. They promoted and pushed rock music as the real thing yet when these rock stars were interviewed they would say always site jazz or blues as the origin of rock. Also at this time there was a sudden increase in the availability of drugs in the black community. Every apparent gain as a result of the civil rights movement was not given up without fight. All gains were achieved because America had a gun to its's head. To question, to speak of change was never willingly allowed the 60's movement was so strong that it couldn't be denied. They could silence a few poets but they couldn't silence an entire nation.

The 1970's was a period of tranquilization. There was no mass movement to continue the motion set forth by the 60's, it was a ten

year period of systematically silencing and discouraging the truth. Poets were made to feel like criminals; people were going back in time because it seemed easier than going forward. Record companies began only to record safe music, musicians began to water down their music. The C.I.A. and F.B.I. had files on the music they knew who was going along with the program, those who bought cars and played electric music and those whose politics were considered a threat to the existing inertia. The neglect of the poor, the neglect of the arts is no accident, this country is sustained by killing off all that is beautiful, that deals with reality. They will go to any lengths to hold back the truth, to prevent the individual from hearing and seeing his or her own vision of life. Some people are controlled by neglect while other are controlled by making them stars.

As the 80's arrived this fire music that talked about revolution and healing had almost vanished only a few musicians continue to play and develop it. The sleepiness of the 70's gave birth to a new electronic age of computers and video machines. Where ever human energy could be saved it was popular music lost what little identity it had. In listening to today's pop music it's hard to tell whether the group is male or female, black or white, synthersizers have replaced living musicians. We have all been desensitized people walk around in dazes sitting back while these blood thirsty gangsters have free reign of the country and of the people's lives.

Our food source, our housing source are owned and operated by power hungry people who do not have our best interest in mind, they only wish to make a profit.

All of this is not new knowledge, it has been said many times before, the message must be constantly repeated, intellectual knowledge of the problems is not enough, we must feel the blade piercing the hearts of all that are oppressed, jailed, starved and murdered by these criminals who call themselves leaders who act in the name of peace and democracy.

Since we have little we must band together pulling all our little resources to form a base in which to work.

We must learn from all the mistakes of the past dropping any selfish notions in order for this movement to succeed, in order for it to take root and begin to grow.

We must ask the questions why am I an artist? Why do I play music? What is the ultimate goal? Am I playing with the same spirit that I played with 10 years ago or have I just become more technically proficient?

The idea is to cultivate an audience by performing as much as possible on a continuous basis, not waiting to be offered work rather creating work. Uniting with all those who hear.

Those who are willing to go all the way. We must put pressure on those with power to give some of it up (picketing, boycotts, petitions, what ever it takes) and finally we must define ourselves and not be defined by others.

We must take control of our lives, building a solid foundation for the future.

Following his stock of knowledge at hand, the researcher offers, as a non Western insight, the description of Plexus made in 1987, in Dakar, by the "insider" Youssouph Traore, president of the Club Litteraire David Diop, in occasion of the presentation to the local authorities of Plexus project.

Youssouph Traore pointed out as follows:

Plexus is a project of an international structure of communication for artists and scientists interested in the interaction of art and science within the everyday life.

Born in 1982 in New York, Plexus has evolved considerably in the realm of the experimental and interdisciplinary research.

Since 1985, it never stopped to stimulate the mutual process of artistic and scientific cooperation. Cooperation realized by the critic dialogue without barriers with the use of the technology.

Next to these practical aspects, Plexus has other dimensions more or less complex, place for reflection, and for information.

Strategical Survival by Withdrawing Art into the Community

Plexus strategical withdrawing of art into the community and into the House of the Slaves in the island of Goree, Dakar, evolved as an art action coherent with the following up of the 1984 community-based open call In Order To Survive.

"Plexus Black Box" as a "withdrawing in order to exchange" is a strategic art survival action to foster new exchanges among artists. It was conceived by the "insider" Fabrizio Bertuccioli, in Rome, in 1988, as he points out (see Appendix E, for full text) as follows:

Withdrawing in order to exchange.

The social composition of a freely composed world is a behavioral system that relates the homogeneous and the heterogeneous.

The homogeneous is the world of industrial production, wherein economy is the model which determines relationships.

The production of exchange is therein reduced to zero and a loss of possible values is determined, the model imposing itself on the heterogeneous through a refusal to communicate which create marginality and impoverishment.

Withdrawing, getting estranged from that model, is an attempt to turn this poverty into wealth. Art as the realm of “gratuitous” is the invention of possibilities of free withdrawal and the production of acts, events, objects, etc.... through which an exchange is reinvented between unrelated and heterogeneous spheres, that of the useful and that of the useless (play).

The reinvention of exchange between these spheres, the re-establishing of a relationship between homogeneous and heterogeneous, allows us to identify values which are necessary for the survival of any civilization.

The Plexus' survival withdrawing from the artworld was identified by several participants as a necessary step for Plexus in order to build new bridges "between unrelated and heterogeneous spheres, that of the useful and that of the useless" as the "insider " Bertuccioli argues.

The "insider" Gaetano Brundu foresees the methodological necessity of this art "withdrawing" from the system for the development of Plexus and the consequent reinforcement of all participants, including the same system, as he points out in his recollection:

Its exit from the system could be important. But how many people are aware about it? How many see the methodological necessity in it? Somebody might fall back often into the temptation of finding a way to get in to the system, a way to success; and this is what I meant before about the jerks.

To exit from the system could be a methodological tool (and it can be also a praxis) that can modify and help Plexus grow in reference to the same system; and in the final analysis it could help that same system grow.

“Plexus Black Box” was conceived in 1989 in a series of discussions among a group of Plexus participants in Rome and in Sardinia.

One of these "insiders" was David Boyle who in reference to the origin of the project under study, in his unpublished paper "La Scatola Nera" (The Black Box), explains:

At the finish of July we commenced a comforting phase of auto-analysis that was made possible by the relative confinement of the Plexus movement within the scattola nera (black box). The confinement is accomplished by utilizing the material residue of the movement that we call documentation in a ritual manner. Until this decisive moment/action the Plexus movement was following the traditional path into history, but by this action which constitutes an intervention in the process, we choose our point from which to address history. The traditional path included a gradual abandonment of active interest in the movement. Founding members of the movement cited dissatisfaction with the shift within the movement away from new ideas. The action taken by the remaining elements of the movement to place the movement in a sort of stasis to facilitate analysis represents a sort of retrospective consensus.

By underlining this kind of "a sort of stasis" described before by David Boyle, Gaetano Brundu argues further as follows:

Plexus has often given the impression of escaping from the system of art and its codes of communication. So therefore it is difficult to identify its relationships with the problematics of contemporary art. If we can find the problem and if we can see at which level of involvement and understanding, we can distinguish between objective and subjective relationships.

Furthermore Plexus is widely innovative (but is it?), the problem can be rather finding what distinguishes the surrounding environment, so we need to define the intrinsic characteristics. And for this reason I think that it is still not arrived the time, because to close Plexus in a label, it is to declare its end. Or would be only the end of its evolving age? This can be something we can think about over the next few months. There is still the fact, rather evident, that many manifestations of Plexus express themselves in a sense of inadequateness, a sort of unprotected lackness compare with the communication in act within the system of art.

A little like as a ship of fools, like a balloon without a router going around the sky. But this can be the element that gives its originality. In this fragile and instable limit between folly and geniuss, between instinct and historical awareness, between excellent flights and falls to the levels of jerks or of pigs, it has played the defining, the destiny, and identity of Plexus.

Plexus "insider" accounts note interconnections between art process, art product and art experience's controlling factors as was pointed out by John Dewey in Art as Experience:

The significance of purpose as a controlling factor in both production and appreciation is often missed because purpose is identified with pious wish and what is sometimes called a motive. A purpose exists only in terms of subject matter. (276)

Dewey underlines the significant value of purpose's capacity to overcome and utilize resistance, to administer materials, which fits fully with the modular construction process of "Plexus Black Box." Dewey further clarifies the significance of purpose as a controlling factor, by an individual transforming imaginative material into the matter of a work of art, leading to the integration of object and subject.

Purpose is this identification in action. Its operation in and through objective conditions is a test of its genuineness; the capacity of the purpose to overcome and utilize resistance, to administer materials, is a disclosure of the structure and quality of the purpose. For, as I have already said, the object finally created is the purpose both as conscious objective and as accomplished actuality. The thoroughgoing integration of what philosophy discriminates as *subject* and *object* (in more direct language, organism and environment) is the characteristic of every work of art. The completeness of the integration is the measure of its esthetic status. For defect in a work is always traceable ultimately to an excess on one side or the other, injuring the integration of matter and form. (277)

Plexus Black Box deals with the perennial issue of the interdependent relation between object-subject as raised up Plexus in its artopera performed in Goya Time, 1985, New York, and underlined again in 1986 with the artopera, Eve, in which hundreds of artists as slaves of art chained themselves together and with their artworks as a statement against any kind of separation between artists, artworks, and community.

The "insider" Franco Meloni in his recollection points out that, to deal with the game of defining "Plexus Black Box" from inside, it was necessary to

shift from one single point view to a fleet of horizons from which to perceive it:

Now the game was seen from the inside. In the series of fleeting focalizations of Plexus, it seemed necessary a further definition of one's own outlook on the problem.

Meloni further argues about "Plexus Black Box" open structure and the impossibility of defining it:

The definitions are always incomplete. To imply in equations concepts that regard multiple interactions, requires an ability of synthesis, and a comprehension that usually is out of the normal experiences. Physics teaches that simplicity, refinement and wealth of some formulas causes an almost sensual pleasure in dimly seeing the route that had determined its concise completeness....

The problems are always very complex and it demonstrates a human but not always verified need, wanting to delimitate them in enclosures rationally or schematically defined. Plexus is consequently hardly definable. The interaction is complicated by the presence of necessary and fundamental human factors. If it is difficult to give order to the atoms, it is incredibly more complex to deal with feelings. And Plexus is full of these. It is impossible to analyse it from the inside....

The system is not closed, and it would be absurd if it was....The metastructures refer to the research of new box opening combinations connected tighter and tighter in a continuous research that finds its reason from the same existence of complexity....

Plexus is a box, more or less big, contained in another one distinguished with difficulty from it.

"Plexus Black Box" has the contingent structure of a nonstop event, made by contingencies, that "insider" David Ecker describes in his recollection looks like the Charles Ives's Three New England Places:

If you look at Plexus Black Box you have fragments and segments something like Ives's piece. But the expectation they made up creates a whole of all, a total. Expectation in postmodern thought is full projections of how the things are in the world and it is very close to everyday life which is made up of fragments and contingencies. This is Plexus and it is only about contingencies, not planned, but incidental. It looks like total confusion from an outsider view but it is not, and one thing is related to the other one and there is so much energy that every thing gets done spontaneously.

Social chaos is fairly typical event of Plexus, made up of acts and gestures performed by distinguished and not distinguished artists and scientists, depending upon the circumstances under which they perform.

These recollections by Plexus participants increase the different non static layers of the researcher's actual interest on which his insider understanding was coming and going through, as it was by Schutz in

Reflections on the Problem of Relevances stated:

As our static analysis of the structure of our stock of knowledge will show, we carry along at any time a certain number of elements of our knowledge not consistent in themselves and not compatible with one other. This is so, on the one hand, because we live simultaneously on different level of reality, and on the other, because by our autobiographical situation we are involved with different layers of our personality (even in that sector of the world on which we bestow, for the time being, an accent of reality. (130)

The "insider" Frans Evers recalling his experience at the "Plexus Black Box Forum" held in Rome in 1990, points out as follows:

I was very intrigued that such a quite complicated but very realistic social story because this only had happened a few months before was so good to communicate with the Italian audience who had gathered there and that, for me, gave the kind of rewards that there is in a much larger field a new awareness of aesthetics arising in which the arts are related in one way or other to what's happening socially and the social dynamics are so enormous nowadays that you hardly are aware of the intensity.

That we will only see when things are slowing down again and become freezing which maybe happen in a number of years but I expect that this kind of dynamic probably still goes on for another ten or fifteen years at least.

So we don't know in what processes we are involved. and therefore I found it very interesting to be faced with Plexus which was one of the few art form still wanting to try to make visible one of the waves in the ocean of art.

The Plexus conceptual survival withdrawing of art into the community may be compared with the withdrawal of art into self performed by contemporary artists as it is clarified by Ursula Meyer in Conceptual Art:

The shift from object to concept denotes disdain for the notion of commodities - the sacred cow of this culture. Conceptual artists, propose a professional commitment, that restores art to artists, rather than to "money vendors." The withdrawal of art into self may be its saving grace. (xx)

Ecker, since his 1963 essay Development of Qualitative Intelligence, draws attention on the need to use intelligence as a survival affair of experience, in which the artistic process is placed, and which should be used, as he argues as follow:

...to solve the insistent and demanding problems of men--the problem of survival in the face of the vicissitudes of nature, as well as the problems of associative living. (172)

In Order to Survive statement was presented in 1984, the art slave ship escaped with on board Eve in 1986, and in 1989 as a strategic survival tactic Plexus moved into a self-frozen "black box," to resist its historic collapse as it has happened to avant-garde art movements. This artistic freezement of activities by giving more time for self-reflective understandings reinforced Plexus beliefs and helped members to become aware of the 15 year historical avant-garde art identity of Plexus, made by an intense activity before and during the current postmodern art trend.

Lucy Lippard in her essay "Changing" raises an alarm about the historical shortness of many works of art :"

A gimmick, a mere novelty, exhausts itself quickly, often helped along by minor artists who recognize its capacity for easy adaptation. It is frequently alarming to find out what work does not survive a short period like five years, which artists can go no farther with their one original idea.(29)

Danto in "The End of Art," underlines the role of theories of art in the success and the failure of many historical art movements by arguing the question of whether art still has a future as part of a progressive linear history:

Just think of the dazzling succession of art-movements in our century: Fauvism, the Cubism, Futurism, Vorticism, Synchronism, Abstractionism, Expressionism, Abstract Expressionism, Pop, Op, Minimalism, Post-Minimalism, Conceptualism, Photorealism, Abstract Reason, Neo-Expressionism-simply to list some of the more familiar ones. Fauvism lasted about two years, and there was a time when a whole period of art history seemed destined to endure about five months, or half a season. Creativity at that time seemed more to consist in making a period than in making a work. The imperative of art were virtually historical imperatives: Make an art-historical period! and success consisted in producing an accepted innovation. If you were successful, you had the monopoly on producing works on one else could, since no one else had made the period with which you and perhaps a few collaborators were from now on to be identified....And each period required a certain amount of quite complex theory in order that the often very minimal objects could be transacted onto the plane of art. (29)

The Repatriation of Art into the Community

The artistic, cultural, social and political crisis of the contemporary period in which the "Plexus Black Box" originated is relevant to an understanding of "The Repatriation of Art into the Community" made as closing act of the Plexus event held in 1993 at the Rosenberg Gallery. It was named following the example of "the repatriation of anthropology" a shift from "outsider" field researches to "insiders" made in the '80s by the American anthropologists who worked abroad.

This shift in interest which produced a trend is described in Anthropology as a Cultural Critique. An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences by Marcus and Fischer as follows:

The reasons for this trend that we call repatriation are multiple.

There is less funding for social-science research, especially for ethnography abroad, the practical applications of which are not apparent. Host societies, protective of their nationalisms, have complicated the acquisition of research permits. And there is indeed a growing awareness in anthropology that the functions of ethnography at home are as compelling and legitimate as they have been abroad. fears that the subject of anthropology, the exotic other, is disappearing have proved groundless: distinctive cultural variation is where you find it, and is often more important to document at home than abroad. There are many modes in which anthropology is repatriating itself. These include providing ethnographic data designed for administrative policy and, in the interest of social reform, alerting the public to problems of society's victims and disadvantaged. (113)

The "insider" Jose Rodriguez claims in his emic account that Plexus concept of "the artist in the first person" reinforces the group beliefs and the role in the community of the artist as producer of cultural art product:

The artist in the first person is the possibility of regaining the power of defining the artistic creation by the artist and as such by eliminating the condition of commodity to their creation. And most important the artist in the first person is defining his creation as a cultural production. This ethical action is only possible through a social praxis within the community.

This social praxis of the artist allows the community to start defining. The community won't be defined by an image and delimited by the dominant structures.

This possibility of the community to define itself allows the community to redefine their self-esteem and to determine their own cultural production.

Also, this autodeinition will allow the community to regain the possibility of knowledge.

Not a knowledge base in the domination of nature and as such a relation based in the domination of one subject to another, but a knowledge based in enhancing the creative subject.

Been the subject of a creative entity allows the community to develop a communicative consciousness and overcome their role of slaves of the dominant structures.

Rodriguez in his unpublished paper "The Voyage of the Elisabeth: Cultural Navigation and Community" (see full text in the appendix E) further argues as follows:

Cultural Synthesis becomes the main enemy/obstacle of the uniqueness-homogeneity of the dominant structures of power - the structures of rationality!

Rationality understood as the language of domination.

The language which perceives all relations as an Struggle, a discourse that perceives the subject as an object of domination.

A domination that has to be understood as the domination by an elitist self-define superior class that elaborates a discourse of fear:

the discourse of ethnical and cultural cleanness;

the discourse that defines all relations as relationships of domination, that defines the subject as an object of possess as another commodity.

Walter Benjamin in The Author as Producer argues against the still current tendency of artists keeping participating in the community, without rethinking their role of producers:

It has been one of the decisive processes of the last ten years in Germany that a considerable proportion of its productive minds, under the pressure of economic conditions, have passed through a revolutionary development in their attitudes, without being able simultaneously to rethink their own work, their relation to the means of production, their technique, in a really revolutionary way. I am speaking, as you see, of the so-called left-wing intellectuals, and will limit myself to the bourgeois left. In Germany the leading politico-literary movements of the last decade have emanated from this left-wing intelligentsia. I shall mention two of them, Activism and New Matter-of-factness, to show with these examples that a political tendency, however revolutionary it may seem, has a counterrevolutionary function as the writer feels his solidarity with the proletariat only in his attitudes not as a producer. (300-301)

The intellectual responsibility of the artist "in the first person" as producer is a current issue in "Plexus Black Box". Antonio Gramsci, a philosopher from Sardinia, where the artist as researcher born, was very concerned with the independent role and responsibility of intellectuals in reference to the struggle for a new culture in which cannot be separated from a new way of intuition of life, of feeling, of seeing reality through which a new

form and content of art will be expressed. David Forgacs in A Gramsci

Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935 reports:

It seems evident that, to be precise, one should speak of a struggle for a 'new culture' and not for a 'new art' (in the immediate sense). To be precise, perhaps it cannot even be said that the struggle is for a new artistic content apart from form because content cannot be considered abstractly, in separation from form.

To fight for a new art would mean to fight to create new individual artists, which is absurd since artists cannot be created artificially. One must speak of a struggle for a new culture, that is, for a new moral life that cannot but be intimately connected to a new intuition of life, until it becomes a new way of feeling and seeing reality and, therefore, a world intimately ingrained in 'possible artists' and'

possible works of art'. Although one cannot artificially create individual artists, this does not therefore means that the new cultural world which one is fighting, by stirring up passions and human warmth, does not necessarily stir up 'new artists' (395)

The "insider" Ray Kelly argues against the temptation to control what cannot be controlled:

We have to go into nature, to work in different areas behind abstract structures in painting, in sculpture, in architecture, in times and future spaces.

Bucky Fuller inspired me by putting together art and science forms in packaging structures, with energy, with language.

Art is a way of life, it is a way of understanding.

Art is something else from money, and from what bullshit is presented usually. Art is the future which can't be controlled. It is in the air without wires. Art is free. The artists are part of the structure which the power system is trying to push out. Liquid forms vs. square lines.

Neither "Plexus Black Box" nor Plexus shows a central organization or one direction or definition as it was pointed out by the "insider" Arturo Lindsay in his recollection. "Plexus Black Box" is understood by the researcher as a conscious effort of many participants to deal with social change. Arturo Lindsay further argues that Plexus since early 80s explored

today emerging postmodern art issues on multiculturalism, radical democracy, cultural diversity and ethics.

The "insider" Andrea Portas in his recollection points out how in Plexus while there is a convergence in social goals shared by participants, there are also many divergent individual positions:

I worked in these years to bring forward the idea of an art free from ties with the market, that it is concerned mainly to re-sew the tugs with the social tissue with which I shared Plexus goals, if often also I disagreed on some attitudes.

It is necessary to understand that inside a group not all positions are accepted by all individuals, to which is left the faculty to refrain from operating in particular circumstances but in which anyway it must prevail the aggregate will, more than the breaking up, and the pushes of the sharing of ideas and routes must be firm and firmly repeatable.

Portas in his recollection further argues as follows:

Plexus: The Problem of Confusion.

The lack of landmarks and roles, the arrogance of some kind attitudes that made the slowdown of the number of the engine turns of Plexus, creating confusion and a kind of vain and presumptuous improvisation incapable to get concrete itself in something more mature. I do not want to say that all should be through away, on the contrary I say that it is arrived the moment to save what good has been done and way not to give value to it; it is arrived the moment to rebuild the operative nucleus which really acts in the interest of all, that takes the change of the organization and of the care of the movement's activities, keeping in contact the artists and informing them of the choices and of the ongoing operative proposals.

Plexus: Out of the Gallery.

I have already mentioned to the relationship of open conflict that Plexus has brought forward against the selling system of the artworks (Art System).

Plexus has often denied the dialogue with the artmarket in the attempt to find different strategies from those of the multinational art societies that mainly operate their choices on the basis of financial needs, secure like they are that the economic factor and of profit is of main importance in the world of visual arts too. To break these schemes the contemporary artist feels the need to look for an alternative audience different from that which usually attends the centers of power and of art consumption like public and private galleries, even if this may imply and implies the growing of economic problems and of maintenance for the artist himself. This way of acting which from some years is followed by different international artists, it is known as

"Out of the Gallery" movement and it consists in the coherent choice to show the work of art in places not exactly in accordance with their fruition. Out of the Gallery, far away from the centers of power, art may return to speak of themes of social interest and of popular involvement, it can start to breathe pure air, to live of its own light.

Plexus: Strategies for an Upcoming Future.

The retrieval of these issues, without that these are resolved through cunning operations of apparent breakdown, the reopening of the borders of the group, the loyalty of purposes and the unity in the choices, are very important for the future of Plexus. Many times the decisions are made by few and this had made the detachment of many artists, who felt excluded and kept out. It will be important afterwards to re-sew the tugs made by too many interferences and intrusions by few who created confusion and little professionally, and above all the coherence of choices and purposes; it is necessary to arrive to the point in which the organization and the improvisation touch each other and they complete themselves in each other.

The Plexus concern of a free democratic exchange among artists and how it should be organized is clearly stated by the participant Luigi Mazzarelli in his unpublished paper under the form of an open letter to the researcher:

The hard experience of Thelema, taught me that when a specific community of intellectuals and artists who sets as essential support to their own relationships a "freedom request," it must know to develop at the same time a balanced form of organization (or not organization) if it does not like to have painful experiences. It is not easy.

From "the Manifesto of the Communist Party" of 1848 to the freedom requests of the students cultural revolutions of 1968, the need of free human exchange, in the concreteness of its own historical development, repeated one thousand times under diverted directions the centrality of the patriarchal organization from which it tried to get free. There is a reason of course in this fatal repetition of the historical experience. Probably the need to channelize creative energies of community members and to counterbalance together centrifugal pushes made up by libidinal impulses and or by individuals' power addressed unwarily to the ruin of the cohesion and of the collective projectuality of the community, it brings fatally to the opponent side.

In other words a balanced form of coexistence between centrality and freedom, from the point of the organizative view, does not have a satisfactory answer in history.

The Living Plexus Black Box of the Voyage of the Elisabeth: A

Contract to be Negotiated, held at the Rosenberg Gallery of New York

University, was the last Plexus event under study. At the entrance of the

Rosenberg Gallery as an introduction to the issues raised by the show it was placed, next to the George Chaikin's optical artwork, the following poem The Box by Alfa Diallo:

Don't you cry
 Because they are killing
 Our brothers and sisters
 All you are expected to do is
 Not give up the fight
 You are the voice of
 The living and the dead
 See that
 You carry on the fight
 Can't you hear people cry
 They want your help
 You may spend
 A life-time fighting for liberation
 There is nothing you can do about that
 No running away
 Join the fight
 Don't turn your back
 Your forefathers died
 Fighting for self-determination
 Don't turn your back
 Because this is your turn
 Your time to get out of
 The Box.

It was about the fight for human rights and against human abuse.

Alfa as an "insider" since the beginnings has in his "emic" account, reported in Chapter IV, raised the need for all of us to go together, to be “one on one” to make Plexus effort a collective vision for freedom.

The idea of One On One was always there in Africa. It is a collective vision. The understanding of this idea is the coming together 2 or more people and this is very important to be understood.

Lucy Lippard in Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America argues against the false notion of democracy in art and in which the elusive subject of multiculturalism is built from a Western theoretical point of view of “art” depending upon the notion of “Quality” transcending boundaries, on

which is based the ethnocentrism in the art, and “is identifiable only by those in power”. She claims, as follows, that because art no longer operates in a context of order, within institutionalized laws, but in a context of disorder, it is a more difficult task for the art critics and aestheticians to cross-culturally look at art in the 90s by repudiating previous criteria:

The conventional notion of good taste with which many of us were raised and educated was based on an illusion of social order that is no longer possible (or desirable) to believe in. We now look at art within the context of disorder-a far more difficult task than following institutionalized regulations. Time and again, artists of color and women determined to revise the notion of Quality into something more open, ...Time and again I have been asked, after lecturing about this material, “But you can’t really think this is Quality?”(7)

The two weeks of Plexus events at the Rosenberg Gallery tested the possibility to develop further some already existing channels of communication with cultural and artists organizations in the Lower East Side, the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, Plexus International Art Urban Forum, and CUANDO Community Cultural Center. But it was very complex and hard because of the diversity of positions, from one side the homogeneous institutional academic system and, to the other side, the heterogeneous community complex.

The insider Frank Pio in his recollection points out these Plexus' difficulties in bridging the gap between the community and the academy:

I co-curated the last Plexus Black Box show at Rosenberg Gallery and my role was to organize the spiritual ritual elements of the show. My participation was also to re-activate the spiritual components of the Plexus Black Box which were lacking in strength and my pieces on the Madonna and Angels was about it. I like to recall the opening ritual of the show in which the most important part was the ritual aspect of it. Most people did not understand initially so many texts. The ritual to take everybody outside. Plexus Black Box was about all this information and about Sandro's dissertation. Plexus as community-based art organization was dealing with Plexus Black Box on the issue of the reconciliation through art in the community. Plexus Well Being and Reconciliation is some how for my interpretation a way to

communicate, to create a dialogue how we can interact together around the world. My vision was related to universal aspects of the planet as it was stated by Marshall McLuhan. Plexus as community-based art organization was dealing with "Plexus Black Box" on the issue of the reconciliation through art in the community. Plexus Well Being and Reconciliation is some how for my interpretation a way to communicate, to create a dialogue how we can interact together around the world. My vision was related to universal aspects of the planet as it was stated by Marshall McLuhan.

The "Plexus Black Box" was brought back to the community to avoid to continue to be contaminated by the academic institution because there was no interests of dialogue with the Lower East Side Community. The students of current issues in art education were invited to participate in the show and to discuss what they experienced there. It became an issue of current issue of art education because of its institutional standard setting. The cards of curriculum game were placed in the show as introduction to an art community-based art education program.

During this community-based experience at the Rosenberg Gallery several issues were discussed concerning how through "art" was feasible to reconcile the conflicts among diversity, among homogeneous and heterogeneous realities. Plexus events, bridging the academy and the community, reinforced the role of "the artist in the first person" in the community. This study as an "insider" multicultural understanding of a community-based art project made by an "artist as researcher" reinforces the academic value of emic knowledge as it was argued by Clifford Geertz in Local Knowledge. It raises up, from the bottom up, the marginal relevance usually given to accounts by "insiders," as "too much" subjective, especially in the case of this inquiry concerned with artists' oral accounts, respect "objective" reports made by "outsider" researchers.

In "The Artist as Researcher: The Role of the Artist in Advancing Living Traditions in Art," David W. Ecker underlines how the model of the "artist as researcher" has affected many art students in regards to their consciousness of the survival of their own cultural and artistic traditions.

While these students come to New York University to learn how to become artists and art educators in the modern world, many of them return to their places of origin with a reawakened consciousness of their own art traditions, a strengthened sense of purpose, and a deeply felt need for cultural renewal. (1)

Ecker points out how this reawakening of consciousness is directly related to the well-being of the artists within their own community.

The felt need to preserve the meanings of a tradition in modern life is directly proportional to the loss of spiritual and material well-being of the artists and artisans sustaining an indigenous culture. (3)

The model of the "artist as researcher," by reinforcing the role of the artist within the community, can be contrasted with the view of art as commodity.

Ecker clearly states it:

We realized that we needed socio-economic models derived from elements drawn from the culture of a region and responsive to its special needs and values. Thus art viewed as entertainment, as a measure of social status, or as an investment by the New York artworld would seem to require a capitalistic model featuring supply and demand, private ownership, and so on. Contrast this view of art as commodity with traditional views of art as sacred and secular performances of making and doing that reinforces continuity and solidarity in the group. (5)

Social Ritual Multi-Arts Open Form

Collaborative participatory efforts, at any level, are producing an increase of that volume of free participation that Miguel Algarin, an insider, foresees in "Plexus Black Box" as its aesthetic image.

The re-opening of "Plexus Black Box" allowed the increase of the resonance of the compressionist Plexus process creating vitality for emerging individual identities, producing new positive energies, through a "modular process," necessary for the further collective creative evolution of this community-based effort. The "modular construction" process, as it is described in the recollection of the "insider" Willem Brugman, reported in

Chapter IV, points out how Plexus art process operates to guarantee the individual identity of participants. In "Plexus Black Box", the volume of the intensity of experience, individual and collective, becomes part of the global and aesthetic "lived" experience of that particular Plexus momentum, creating that kind of intensity of free participatory collective experience, described in Chapter IV by Miguel Algarin as the "volume" of the intensity of a Plexus event's aesthetic experience. The "insider" Giancarlo Schiaffini describes also in Chapter IV how the creative improvisational process of "Plexus Black Box" required a long hard training in order to arrive to the current advanced collaborative open art form as results of years of working on structures, ability and attitude, modifying in a moment the work of many years.

In Chapter IV, the "insider" Butch Morris in his recollection offers other insights to understanding what was new in Plexus collaborative art process is the creation of a new artform as a significant individual collective art expression of different visions as well as an open multidisciplinary art format characterized by the integration of multiplex levels of perspective and experience within particular surroundings.

The "insider" Lorenzo Pace in his recollection describing how "Plexus Black Box" is able to "make sense from nonsense" creating multilayers of communication links among artists with different backgrounds, without the need to understand fully its contents, he argues as follows:

I never understood the concept but I knew that it was right and he was inspired to participate in Plexus which relates people with other ethnic background all together.

When we went in Sardinia in 1987, we were more than 200 artists and scientists from all over the world and from all arts fields, with different views. It was a great and complex experience. It was my first time that I was in Sardinia and I was fascinated by that its nature, its history and culture. Plexus is a vary experience made in many different spaces and times during the last ten years. Plexus was able to bring so many people with different political vision to reflect together upon the

impact of Columbus on the Americans as an issue of reconciliation among all of us as human beings and not only of a issue of conflict. Plexus was able to create multilayers communication links among artists with different backgrounds. "Plexus Black Box" is a philosophical concept in which he feel to be related with the others Plexus artists without to understand fully its real contents, because it is not so important to understand everything but to feel positive about it and to go for it and through it.

My experience about Plexus, made in ten years, allows myself to say that I knows that everything that does not make sense, beyond the scene, later goes in focus. It is not necessary for an artist to have everything in a logical sequential form, but to feel good about and to have fun.

But Plexus, also in formal sense as for example in the events made with Franco Meloni at the University of Cagliari, was able to accomplish also more structured institutional expectations. Plexus art events were able to make sense from no sense.

"Plexus Black Box" is made by a free participatory effort of people that like what they are doing and it is made by material, immaterial, and ephemeral interconnected elements hardly to be described as insider Maria Pia Marsala points out in her recollection:

I would like to recall as a meaningful part of my continuos experience with Plexus Black Box, from its opening performance in 1989, in Rome, at Metateatro, until to its closing in 1993, in New York, at the Rosenberg Gallery, that in Plexus there are not visible elements which oblige you/us to use intuition to feel them, like for example, when in 1989 at Metateatro Plexus Black Box hold surreally a music note played by Giancarlo Schiaffini inside a container representing Plexus Black Box, and then all of us moved through "la porta del cuore" (the door of the hearth) with a magic word: "I am" and by our own name. We ended that performance by laughing and by presenting to the audience a Plexus Campbell Soup Can as an artwork.

For David Ecker, "art is the ability to transcend a time-space, a place, and literally makes a ritual that which reinforces the value and beliefs of the group." This reinforcement process as a liminal "communitas" ritual may serve the "outsider" reader to understand how functions Plexus art process.

Plexus participant Barbaby Ruhe explains in his paper, "Plexus," (see full text in Appendix E) how this reinforcement process in Plexus functions:

Plexus is the shaman journey along the lines of Van Gennep's Rites of Passage's format.

That is, the Plexus art opera is an evolving art action that engages in three distinct phases: the first phases the identification and dialogue with the Norm or status quo, embracing the system of art logic even as the embrace is deadly. The second phase is the idematerialization of our constellation of concepts surrounding art activity; this phase is what Victor Turner calls the liminal phase where roles reverse, definitions are tossed back into the air, confusion reigns around blazing ambiguities functioning like a Rorschach blot, and artists dive in with no clear functions delineated. At first the second phase seems like just so much nonsense, like acts of desperation. The third phase is the rematerialization around the Plexus metaphor. Like a pearl formed around an irritating grain of sand, Plexus sets up a metaphor that engages art activity without precise directives. You have to be there: Artists congregate because of a sensed "communitas" and mill about when the directives are clearly unclear. At some undetermined moment, the mob coheres into congruity.

Victor Turner in The Anthropology of Performance clarifies the concept of liminal space and of "communitas" that Barnaby Ruhe points out as part of the Plexus evolving community-based art process.

Extreme individualism only understands a part of man. Extreme collectivism only understand man as a part. Communitas is the implicit law of wholeness arising out of relations between totalities. But communitas is intrinsically dynamic, never quite being realized. It is not being realized precisely because individuals and collectivities try to impose their cognitive schemata on one another. The process of striving towards and resistance against the fulfillment of the natural law of communitas necessitates that the unit of history and of anthropology (which takes into account the sociocultural schemata) and also the unit of their analysis is drama, not culture or archive. And certainly not structural relationship. Structure is always ancillary to, dependent on, secreted from process. And performances, particularly dramatic performances, are the manifestations par excellence of human social process. (84)

The "insider" George Chaikin underlines in his emic understanding the ritual role performed by the documentation in Plexus event by reinforcing collective participation:

What is the Plexus Black Box and what is its function? Ritual is very important in the understanding of it by giving continuity and connecting one activity to another one.

Initially I did not like ritual but after I participated more in these activities I understood that the ritual of documentation became significant part of Plexus by keeping in it the life of the community and bringing people together.

The ritual activities of the documentation became a form of collective joint participation in which each one gave up something in order to share in a global participation which turned to become a contemporary art form.

These ritual activities of Plexus Black Box which easily could be characterized as chaotic activities turned into a kind of art form which ended by also documenting the unity and coherence of all this chaos.

Plexus Black Box became in the end the unifying element of a collective participation in which the photo of that moment was the key ritual element of a documentation for Plexus own history.

Gadamer points out in The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other

Essays in reference to the festive character of celebrations:

Furthermore, it is a community in which we are gathered together for something, although no one can say exactly for what it is that we have come together. It is no accident that this experience resemble that of art, since celebration has its own specific kinds of representation. (40)

“Plexus Black Box” generated a creative art environment, a kind of social chaos for artists and scientists to be free to interconnect with the environment. Within this social environment through the ritual of art they experimented new forms of communication, traversing forms, disciplines and cultures.

Plexus Compressionist Art Process

What you feel and see is your own creation. We have created a new interactive art movement. We are called PLEXUS. I am labelling it: iMytho-Compressionismî.

This book represents, in a flat compressed version, the hopes, visions, poetry, music, dreams of hundreds of artists. This book represents a small scale version, a special history of four operas. These Co-Operas were and are the personal visions of Art History, of Francisco Goya, of

Purgatory, of Mythology trance-formed into a simultaneous Tableau. Here, we have compressed history, re-created mythology. Time has speed up and there is no time left for aesthetic distance between the artist as performer and the Art Observer. In these simultaneous Co-Operas we have destroyed this distance, and they in turn interact, creating a new operatic form. We have extended the compass of vision to include the former observer as participant. We are user friendly. Use us or lose us. We are all independent thinker and dreamer collating our collective visions collaboratively. Please experience us wisely and with an open heart. This is open ART.

This quote by the "insider" Leonard Horowitz, from his 1986 unpublished paper Introduction to PLEXUS: Recall 1, Passport for Purgatorio, (see his compressionist texts in Appendix E), is used by the artist as researcher to introduce the "Plexus Black Box" art process.

The "insider" David Boyle described in his recollection "Plexus Black Box" as a "compressed integration of different uses of art media in new art forms, "where documentation stops and art begins."

Leonard Horowitz in his unpublished paper "Compressionism" describes Plexus compressionistic process (see full text in Appendix E) as follows:

So we can say that because of the concept and the simulsensuous presentation, that there was an intense compression of time, of events, of experience, of total unexpectedness.... If we have been subconsciously influenced by the motion picture (and now television), as I believe we all are, then the obvious differences between the Plexus process and especially any of Wilsons masterpieces (Einstein on the Beach) is that Robert Wilson's oeuvre has a strong sense of slowed motion and Plexus has the quality of Pixillation, of jump cut, of extreme compression.

A Polish mathematician, Klaus Wyborny, working in Hamburg, Germany, a number of years ago (and using a timing devise on his camera), automatically pixillated frames from Citizen Kane and compressed this famous film into three minutes! The result is a very short film that compresses the images to the extent that the people disappear and the images are transformed into an atomic type mushroom cloud with a peculiar black dot that seems like an insect flying in and out of the cloud.

This is a transformation of the original classic into a totally abstract process and sculptural vision. And that has been the Plexus process,

whether we have dealt with the theme of Dante's Purgatorio, with the symbolic universal Serpent and with Eve in the Garden of Eden.

This Plexus compressionistic photo art process, where "photos of the photos in the photos of previous events in which were other photos in the photos, etc." was described by the "insider" Lynne Kanter in her recollection as the seed process through which Plexus art altar installations and ritual art

performance developed as works of art through the internalization of Plexus records and relics into their formal structure.

Robert C. Morgan in Conceptual Art. An American Perspective claims the "internalization" of the document into the work of art accomplished by conceptualist artists, using especially photography as a "memory device," carrying information related to the social cultural context, in which the work of art was located, or connected. Morgan further argues:

The problems of documentation in Conceptual Art cannot be solved simply by understanding how they exist as primary information. Often a document will stand as a reference to something other than itself. A photograph, for example, may exist solely on a referential level without any aesthetic value of its own. The referent becomes the idea, core or nexus of the piece-not encapsulated by any regard for material "permanence."

Another type of document may exist not solely for its referential value but for its component value as well. In this case, the document exists within the context of a particular semiotic system. (44-45)

Robert C. Morgan explains the significance of the theoretical statements of conceptualist artists as follows:

Rather than presenting the viewer with an object or series of objects to contemplate in terms of formal-visual structure, the conceptualist presented statements to be read usually accompanied by various

documents which were intended as supportive evidence within some idea-based schema or system. Given this approach, it could be said that the negation of the art object was an attempt to bring the raw material of everyday life back into the context of the art experience (2).

Plexus artists accumulated within the "Plexus Black Box" numerous accounts of the artistic process. The "insider" Anna Saba, as she points out in her following recollection, has internalized relics and records from "Plexus Black Box" into new works of art, encompassing large quantity of quotations of quotations:

I am a sculptress who mainly works Sardinian stones - trachytes - and marbles. In the Plexus movement I used many kinds of materials. Plexus helped me to look at different species of artistical activities. The use of the metaphora was the best tool to overcome the limits due to different languages. And this refers not only to the ethimological sense of the word. I gave my contribution to the visibility of Plexus with many works dedicated to the documentation of the various phases of the trail of the multimedia movement. Presently, the seven (and here too the metaphora is present) sculpture - books draw a part of the common history.

Quotations of quotations in quotations in works of art, as in the case of the photos of the photos in the photos, whose relevance could seem marginal, had to be also recognized as relevant components in the understanding of "Plexus Black Box", as Goodman argues in Ways of Worldmaking:

Then a photograph may actually contain a duplicate of a second photograph; and the first, if it also refers to the second through showing it as in a frame, etc., might then be said to quote it directly (48).

Plexus and its "Plexus Black Box" are developing in time and space, but non in a linear manner. The "insider" George Chaikin notes these changes in his recollection:

My feeling of "Plexus Black Box" is that there is a continuous shift of what is in the box and why. I believe that its relevance was more

related with whom in that moment was participating and from the circumstances.

I participated without understanding what I was doing with the belief that others were understanding. Over years, as the process recurs, in retrospect, I began to understand what was happening. Sometime I did not know what and why something was happening but, later on, it made sense. The Plexus process is a not linear activity and less rationale, which the coherence appears only after the fact....and you will understand it only after you let yourself participating into it.

Plexus' non linear and interactive art process is also described by the "insider" Maria Pia Marsala in her recollection as made by the "fully interactive" atmosphere of participation before, during, and after the Plexus event:

There was no stage direction, there was no support of any kind to help us, to express ourselves. On stage everybody, as artists in the first person, performed their own personalities as acting characters, often in conflicts with others' one, representing the complex theme "The Voyage in the Planet of Art" as an interaction of different human beings with different points of view. Fully interactive were our meetings, before and after the show, with everybody, journalists, artists, scientists, writers, curious, to discuss their and our opinions about how to arrive to "Pianeta Arte" as the only meaningful way to understand what we were doing there. We had several hard discussions and usual characteristics conflicts among all us, but these tensions created new materials, interacting with that show, which we developed in the Plexus events performed in 1990 and in 1991, and since the recent ones.

The "insider" Giancarlo Schiaffini offers a "compressed" description of "Plexus Black Box" as insider-outsider improvised "container" interconnecting what is inside with what is outside, allowing further unknown links of any kind artistic nature, creating "a quite big interaction" among participants and a kind of energy, not planned and framed in advance.

Intense elements interconnecting among themselves create a synergistic resonance leading to the kind of participatory ritual aesthetic experience that Miguel Algarin saw in the volume of Plexus events.

Against the Slavery of Art "Isms"

"Plexus Black Box" may be considered an intellectual product which "struggled" within specific geo-political and historical modernist and postmodernist influences bound to the institutional environment which it took place. The historical non Western strategical "move" of Plexus was to shift its focus from the New York Artworld to Goree island, Senegal, the site of the most important House of the Slaves, in Africa, declared historical landmark by UNESCO. The House of the Slaves in Goree became the international aesthetical and ethical stage from where Plexus is presenting its "well being" challenge against the notion of "Artworld" and against the concept of "autonomous art". Its strategical international "move" is made by setting its "own" art stage in the local and international community, outside the Western Artworld, and to identify the House of the Slaves in Goree, Senegal, as the symbolic historical site to where is addressed Plexus effort of "the repatriation of art into the community."

The "insider" Assane M'Baye in his recollection offers a point of view from Dakar:

Dakar-Plexus behind to be a strategic point between North and South and New York, Sardinia, Rome, Amsterdam, Dakar-Plexus movement goes to bring its serpent with a large "S." Goree is the symbol of a suffering history, the slavery and the Negro trade made the opening of the Atlantic sea and the invention of the "New World." All has begin from this, (door without return) today, as you say, we want to pass the limits of space-time, in the research of new dimensions throughout the ocean of art with new means of communication and of science.... In the House of the Slaves, Goree, on August 26, 1988, we launched an open letter to the artists of the world to announce the arrival of the ship of the slaves of art.

"Art" has through the ages been closely connected with political power, where political and economic power were identical or closely linked, and still

remained closely allied to the bourgeois values, as it is argued by Jose Rodriguez in his recollection:

The Artist in the first person is a concept evolving from the following facts: that the perception of an autonomous art is a fallacy of the rationality of the Modern era.

This "autonomous art" instead of negating the condition of artistic creativity as another commodity in reality is confirming this condition of commodity. As such the artistic production is another artifact named by the dominant structures of power and as such the artistic creation become an object of possession of the dominant power. As

the dominant structures have this power also they determine and define what is to be considered "art."

By such action the dominant structures eliminated two fundamentals elements of the artistic creativity - the artistic production as a reflection of the social praxis and as a cultural production.

By this power the dominant structures are able to define in terms of "high" and "low" culture, "civilized" and "savage" culture. And most importantly this definition is a detriment for the cultural production of the society. To a great extent, Rodriguez stresses that " "by overcoming the relation of master-slave the artist in the first person and the community are able to start to participate in their own definition."

Plexus is a community based art effort that operating in order that art is again recognized as a cultural product occurring within a broader cultural art community-based context. The "Artworld" described by Danto and Dickie is a social activity which concerns the political body.

"Art" has through the ages been closely connected with political and economic power. Financial reports from art auction houses confirm that art is an exclusive commodity symbol, like gold, diamonds, bonds, or merchandise. For the economic transformation of the value of a work of art into money, labels and definitions coming from the Artworld are essential. In this sense the "Artworld," as it is defined by Arthur Danto, is labelling the property of "art" by the artmarket and the consequent slavery of "art" from the "Isms"

made by art theories together with the aesthetics claim of the absolute "autonomy of art."

The researcher as an "insider" argues also that the interference of the Artworld in the creative art process has pushed the emerging of "artists in the third person," who are willing to produce artworks following artmarket needs and will.

The "insider" Algarin calls for attention for the risk that artists as an "elite" have to be taken away from their community, if, he argues, "we do not plant our feet on the sidewalk." .

The Art Market is more sophisticated than the traditional commercial market, because it is made by the intellectual of the power class.

The need of the artists to negotiate a new art contract was raised in 1986 at Eve artopera. In 1988, inside the House of the Slaves in Goree, at the end of a street parade-ritual art performance by hundreds African artists, the researcher in the role of coordinator of Plexus presented to the authorities the Plexus International Open Call for A World Art Bank, In Order To Survive, together with the first lot of works of art by Sardinian artists, supporting the need of an international negotiation for a new art contract, in which "art" is understood and respected as a paramount universal resource for the "well being" of Humankind.

In 1989, in Dakar, at the Gallery Agit Art, as Plexus coordinator, the artist as researcher presented the Plexus project for "A World Art Bank In Goree, Dakar" to the Minister of Urban Resources of Senegal, within an art presentation to the press. He claimed the need of a route correction in the world of art, defending the right of freedom of access into the artworld's center for all artists at the margins of it. He underscored the risk for artists accepting this artworld structure to become slaves of its already structured hierarchic rules, theories, labels and Isms. "Eating Art" was written in the label of a

Plexus Campbell Soup Can, that he hold up, together with current art quotations from most important American Auction Houses in the World. It was clearly stated that the strategical positionament of Plexus World Art Bank next to the House of the Slaves in Goree was an ethical and creative survival

art action as well as it was creative Marcell Duchamp's appointment changing an urinal into the artwork "Fountain."

In 1993, the strategical survival vision of Plexus for the need of a renegotiation of a new contract between the community and the institutional world was written at the top of the title of the last Plexus event under inquiry: A Contract to be Negotiated, Columbus Egg: The Living Plexus Black Box of "The Voyage of the Elisabeth," held within the institutional setting of the Rosenberg Gallery of New York University. It was ended with the performance The Repatriation of Living Plexus Black Box into the Community which symbolically was performed by the exit of two boxes out the NYU Barney Building, going back to the Lower East Side Community.

Now in 1997, the new contract of art made by Plexus "insiders" for the World Art Bank in Goree is moving forwards, making more aware participants of their intellectual responsibility.

Plexus like other avant-garde historical art movements has taken position against the "Isms" trend in modern and postmodern art history.

Sadie Plant describes in The Most Radical Gesture. The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age the European political and cultural context in the '70s and in the '80s, after the French students revolt in 1968, and the Italian Red Brigades in the '70s. This historical cut, it is significant to understand the cultural historical background of the Plexus concept of art

slaves, coming from the 1978 Roman art slave market event by L.I.A.C.A. for cultural freedom in Italy.

Sadie Plant connects together all XX Century's avant garde art movements, by having in common the same need of freedom, to be in charge of their identity, destiny, and history, therefore they were very concerned with their own definitions, as Plant argues:

The situationists adopted some aspects of the forms of organization developed by their avant-garde predecessors. Together with the internationalism and eclecticism of Dada, the internal discipline exercised by the surrealists was carried into the SI where it served the primary purpose of constituting a group in control of its own destiny, a movement impossible to define in terms other than its own. The SI resisted all attempt to institutionalise its theory as an ideological "ism", and insisted that the group should have nothing in common with the hierarchical power, no matter what form it may take. (81)

Eating Art

“Plexus Black Box” as last event under study in this inquiry was presented at the Rosenberg Gallery of New York University in occasion of the last event under study. It was a two week cultural navigation program related to issues multiculturalism in art, associated with the NYU course “Current Issues in Art Education,” by David W. Ecker.

In these two week program, curated by the researcher and Frank Pio, as "insider" of the study, it was explore the possibility to build bridges between the university and the multicultural community of the Lower East Side, developing a community-based art education project and increasing interactive dialogue between artists, students, teachers, community activists, and city commissioners. The position of the Rosenberg Gallery, in the Barney Building, in the Lower East Side was strategically used to facilitate a broader participation from the community, including some radical activists.

The purpose was to reinforce the role of the artist as a cultural producer in the community, who through her/his aesthetic experience is setting impact in the quality of life, with a sense of broader "well being" as it is addressed in the statement of mission of the Consortium for the Well Being in the XXI Century, endorsing the definition of "health" given by the World Health

Organization which states as follows: "health is the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

"Eating Art" concept underscoring the universal value of "art" as a human resource points out as well as art as a "nutritional" component in the sociobiological coevolution of the humankind which has ethical implications for the "well being" in the XXIst Century.

"Eating Art" concept, in Plexus, since 1986, is associated with the artistic representation of the molecular model of the immunological cellular messenger Interleukine 2, IL2, made by Gaetano Brundu, who explored, with a series of drawings, named "Les Messangers," the encounter between immunology, art, and the survival of connected forms, as he describes in his recollection:

In the middle of the 80's came the encounter with the Interleukine 2 or better with the image of its molecular model elaborated in the laboratories of the University of Paris VI and published in the monthly French journal *La Recherche* in the May 1986.

That image, made by Rimsky e Norris, represents one of the plausible configurations of the IL2 (Interleukine 2) in the space.... The image of that model of IL2 I have put next that of my "baffo" (moustache), they have interacted in various ways in my pages,...

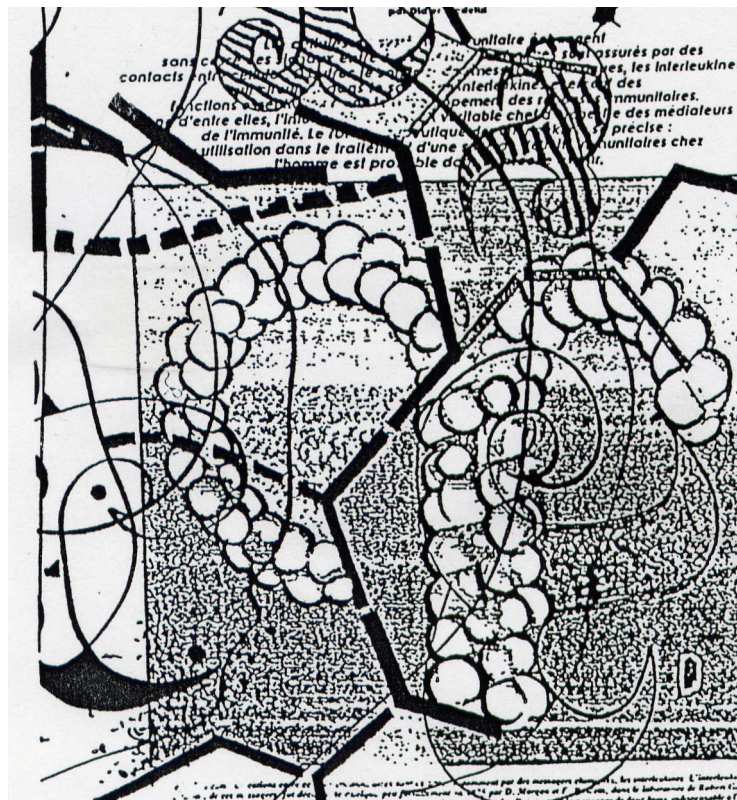
The general title of my operation was the same title of the article of *La Recherche*: "Les Messangers de l'Immunité."

I was intrigued enough by those images very similar to mine “baffo,” that appears suddenly on the panorama of science, connected to the mechanisms of immunity that are inner most mechanisms in defence of the organism. Also there a sign of strong vitality that I believe is at the bottom of the mistery of life and of the survival of beings and of species. The mistery of my fantasy solidified, the animal pregerminal vitality and the intimit defence found themselves in my creative work, in my fantasy over a distance of years.

From an other side I was intrigued by the same mystery that took care of the genesis of certain forms and images, the encounter between gesture from which was born my first moustache and the systematic methodology of scientific research that brought me the implausible model of that molecule.

Figure 51

Immunological Art Messengers



Artwork by Gaetano Brundu, Cagliari, 1986.

“Aesthetics” in the late 80s, and the re-emerging role of “art” and of the biological insertion into the world reinforced human capacities to deal with multicultural changes of perception and values, and became a

sociobiological realm of investigation and a critical issue in the philosophical debate upon the free will of the human being with respect to the supposed determinism of cognitive sociobiology. Edward Wilson, another sociobiologist with whom Lumsden worked together, claims in *Biofilia* that art is a living structure born from the environmental interaction between biology and culture, a device for exploration and discovery which, as a human mind, grows by absorbing parts of the culture in existence.

The mind is biologically prone to discursive communication that expands thought. Mankind, in Richard Rorty's expression, is the poetic species. The symbols of art, music, and language freight power well beyond their outward and literal meanings. So each one also condenses large quantities of information. Just as mathematical equations allow us to move swiftly across large amounts of knowledge and spring into the unknown, the symbols of art gather human experience into novel forms in order to evoke a more intense perception in others. Human beings live--by symbols, particularly words, because the brain is constructed to process information almost exclusively in their terms. I have spoken of art as a device for exploration and discovery (74).

"Art" possesses the amazing quality of being able to communicate over thousands of years outside of historical and social repressive contexts, the function of art differs from society to society, from civilization to civilization. But apparently everywhere, art communication may range from a simple signification to the most complex value.

Morse Peckham in Man's Rage for Chaos argues that artistic activity is a mode of biological adaptation, and the biological function of artistic behaviour is a mode of adaptation of the human organism to a non-human environment. Peckham considers the category "art" like a "disjunctive category," which serves through discontinuity and chaos to exercise our modes of perception:

Art, as an adaptational mechanism, is reinforcement of the ability to be aware of the disparity between behavioural pattern and the demands

consequent upon the interaction with the environment. Art is rehearsal for those real situations in which it is vital for our survival to endure cognitive tension, to refuse the comforts of validation by effective congruence when such validation is inappropriate because too vital interests are at stake; art is the reinforcement of the capacity to endure disorientation so that a real and significant problem may emerge (314).

“Plexus Black Box” as a community-based art project can be interpreted as an answer to the questions raised by our times for a better social understanding of human environments, as John Dewey in Art as Experience points out:

Art is the extension of the power of rites and ceremonies to unite men, through a shared celebration, to all incidents and cents of life. This office is the reward and seal of art. Art also renders men aware of their union with one another in origin and destiny. (271)

Further, Dewey points out that when works of art from different cultures meet together it enlarges our experience:

Nevertheless, when the art of another culture enters into attitudes that determine our experience genuine continuity is effected. Our own experience does not thereby lose its individuality but it takes unto itself and weds elements that expand its significance. A community and continuity that do not exist physically are created. (336)

Lucy Lippard, in Mixed Blessing. New Art in a Multicultural America, by pointing out an increasing of individual difficulties within the existing multicultural world argues that more difficulties are raising for "art" as a shareable lived experience:

One's own lived experience, respectfully related to that of others, remains for me the best foundation for social vision, of which art is a significant part. Personal association, education, political and environmental contexts, class and ethnic backgrounds, value systems and market values, all exert their pressures on the interaction between eye, mind, and image. In fact, cross-cultural perception demands the repudiation of many unquestioned, socially received criteria and the exhumation of truly "personal" tastes. It is not easy to get people to think for themselves when it comes to art because the field has become

mystified to the point where many people doubt and are even embarrassed by their own responses; artists themselves have become separated from their audiences and controlled by the values of those who buy their work. (7-8)

Therefore the project under study intends to reinforce the reintegration of artf and of the individual, within its community cultural and biological context.

"Eating Art" concept, in Plexus, since 1988, is associated with the artistic representation of the Plexonian Art Money made by Micaela Serino.

Figure 52

Plexonian Money



Artwork by Micaela Serino, Rome, 1991.

The "Repatriation of Art into the Community" is a critical condition for the understanding of the project under study as well as for the reinforcement of the artist and of the community, and all together for the survival and advancement of the "well being" of humankind.

As an "insider," David Ecker, in his "Cultural Navigation" paper, (see full text in the Appendix E) presented at the international symposium on the Well-Being in the XXIst Century, one of the Plexus events under study, raises the claim that it is imperative to bring artistic and aesthetic dimensions into the in vision of a new model of "well being."

The nutritional, social, ethical, and economic aspects of well-being will undoubtedly receive critical attention in the proceedings of the Forum. But the artistic and aesthetic dimensions of life as we live it must figure in any formulation of a comprehensive vision of well-being. The arts make visible our cultural identity and diversity, and provide a direct measure of the vitality of the culture in which a particular art object or event is embedded. It follows that the arts and their living traditions have a special role to play in the relation to the well-being of the members of each of the cultures of the world (2).

As it is stated by many "insider" accounts, "Plexus Black Box" was created by a group of Plexus participants, including the researcher, to answer a need for the survival of Plexus, by reinforcing the solidarity and continuity of the group. In Plexus creative art process of reconciliation, linking the artist to the whole environment exists the necessary condition for the unified survival of the participant and of the environment. Participants and environment are interdependent from each other, and within an "ecological mind" system they are both interactive participants of an "informational network", that by retroactive driving feedbacks, is sharing survival "metamessages" among its participants, as Gregory Bateson in Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity argues:

Therefore, if B is going to deal with A's indication, it is absolutely necessary that B know what those indications mean. Thus, there comes into existence another class of information, which B must assimilate, to tell B about the coding of messages or indications coming from A. Messages of this class will be, not about A or B, but about the coding of messages. They will be of a different logical type. I will call them metamessages (115).

C.A. Bowers in his article Implications of Gregory Bateson's Ideas for a Semiotic of Art Education claims that Bateson, in Steps to an Ecology of Mind, linking the individual to the whole environment in which she or he is part, challenges the anthropocentric Western culture, and opens a radical new way of understanding art, in which "art" is not anymore a "simple expression

of the individual's inner mental state", as it is the case for "autonomous art," but a significant part of "a system or ecology of relationships."

Bowers points out further that "we can begin to shift the focus of attention from the plentitude of individual self-expression to the plentitude of relationships that we share with each other and other life forms" and to start to understand how "the image of the self as an autonomous individual has contributed to the non recognition of the larger informational network that constitutes the person's relations with other people and the natural environment."

"Eating Art," "Plexonian Art Money," "The Repatriation of Art into the Community" and "World Art Bank in Goree Island" are strategical alternative tactic ideas encompassed in the "Plexus Black Box" project, finalized to open discussions among participants, and to initiate in this way interactive dialogues and interconnected exchanges among participants. Its purpose is the improvement of the overall dynamics of the system in which participants are interdependent interactive components, and at the same time, to advance the "well being" of all individual participants and collective components.

The reinforcement of the individual and collective "well being", within her/his own cultural and biological context is the aim of the further development of the emic knowledge produced by this study which made possible the repatriation of "Plexus Black Box" into the community.

The "insider" Jose Rodriguez in his emic account describes the growing role of "Plexus Black Box" as an integrating system between the academy and the community:

The role of "Plexus Black Box" is to expose, to integrate all aspects of the society, art is one of these as well as science and technology. The concept of Plexus Black Box is a growing concept of a scientific

system build in an institutional academic setting which is integrating artistic and cultural experiences in the community met during its growing. The knowledge of one is integrated into the knowledge of other one.

Plexus identified strategy was to obtain as first step an reinforcement of artists's beliefs in the community by bringing back at home, to repatriate, "art," complete with its financial value of a commodity, to the community and therefore to the artists at the margins of the so-called "Artworld," shifting in this way not only an economic and philosophical flow of resources but also reactivating an healing "well being" process, able then to drive the community and the academy together into a ethical and aesthetic participatory route correction in the human use of the human being, which is a critical condition for the survival and advancement of humankind.

The Well-Being in the XXI Century

The "insider" Miguel Algarin, foresaw "Plexus Black Box" becoming part of a larger informational hybrid network, encompassing information on cultural and natural forms. "Plexus Black Box" is a survival community-based art product, which may be used, within the current critical path of raised by the impact of multicultural art together with social environment transformation for the development of a new paradigm of "well being" within a learning and teaching arts education program, which made "bottom up", from the community to the academy, recognized the emic quality of local knowledge which will indicate what are community needs, and how institutions may contribute to their solutions. "Plexus Black Box" art process is a "double participatory exchange," from inside to outside and viceversa, from the bottom up to top down and viceversa, encompassing heterogeneous and homogeneous systems.

"Plexus Black Box" challenges the homogeneous system and closed paradigm as one of the "anomalies" (109) described by Thomas S. Kuhn in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. These "anomalies" as Kuhn argues emerge in crisis time and challenge scientific community to confront themselves with "anomaly" events whose information may provide a survival map to contemporary questions.

"Plexus Black Box" was made by as a strategic survival move, expressing Plexus' concern of its relationship with the institutional world as it was argued by the "insider" Arturo Lindsay in his recollection in Chapter IV.

As a strategic project "Plexus Black Box" was presented and discussed by Arturo Lindsay, George Chaikin, Miguel Algarin, Earl S. Davis, Franco Meloni, Mico Licastro, and the researcher in occasion of the Marconi ,95 Well Being Navigating Global Cultures, the second international reconciliation forum, held in 1995 on the theme of "Strategies for the Well Being in the XXI Century", at the University of Cagliari.

As a creative framework, "jazz-life" oriented, "Plexus Black Box" was considered as an alternative strategic paradigm to reopen local and international cooperation exchanges that currently are jeopardized by the crisis in international cooperation. "Plexus Black Box" is a dynamic and open framework in progress learning how to deal with the challenge of the our times for a new multicultural synthesis, which mutually made in the '80s should serve in the '90s as a multilateral multi-arts model, "jazz-life" oriented, to reinforce the "well being" and the reconciliation among people through art. It is learning how to re-open dialogues in the community among individuals, young artists and masters, students and teachers, in separated communities of different cultures, classes, and genders, from different part of the world. The need of this new multicultural synthesis was started to be expressed by the insider Jose Rodriguez in 1989 at the founding meeting of the 1992

Christopher Columbus Consortium which led the departure of a fleet of projects of cultural navigation, presented by Lorenzo Pace, George Chaikin, David W. Ecker, Franco Meloni, Earl S. Davis, Rolando Politi, Nilda Cortez, Patricia Nicholson Parker, and Okechukwu Oditia.

At the Forum, Jose Rodriguez claimed the survival need of the redefinition of this new multicultural synthesis as a new paradigm leading to a new model of vision of "well being" in the XXI Century, as he stated in his paper "The Voyage of the Elisabeth" (see full text in the Appendix E):

The Artist in the First Person and its praxis within the community insurance's the possibility of naming and defining the cultural production. The possibility of reconciliation among individuals and cultures is only possible through a reality base on multiplicity and diversity. The only way in which this diversity may Reconcile is within the bridge of the cultural navigation.

Multiplicity-diversity: pluralism is the only possibility of freedom! Freedom that defines the subject as the Permanent becoming as the possibility of a synthesis of the diversity. This cultural synthesis is the concretization of the well being for our present and for the possibility of the next Century. The Well Being is possible as far as the artist and its community are able to develop and create a new cultural synthesis.

Emic understandings of "Plexus Black Box" may serve as a multilateral framework paradigm for methodology in the development of a community-based arts education program, that built from "bottom up", does not impose from the top "outsider" political visions from that school or agency that has nothing to do with the real need of that community.

Plexus on the issue of the Well Being in the XXI Century has conceived and participated in the launch of several "Open Calls" starting from the "1992 Columbus Open Call for Reconciliation" (see document in Appendix D) to the "1995 Marconi Well Being Open Call" and to the "1996 Route Correction From Welfare to Well Being," made together with the "1996 Body Bee Calling XXI Century", and closing with "Plexus International Open Call for a World

Art Bank in Goree, Against Any Slavery, In Order to Survive," which were launched out from the art event From Welfare to Well Being: Eating Art, Get the Best From Your Food, Food for All, organized in Rome, by the Consortium for the Well Being in the XXI Century and presented as a special parallel event to the World Food Summit by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

The inquiry at its beginning questioned the "objective" validity of "insider" accounts and related emic procedures. At the end of the study, the intense "insider" participation, that has sustained the artist as researcher in his long efforts, allows marginal components of the study, hidden or isolated in the margin of the field research to arrive at the kernel or thematic center of the inquiry, as it was outlined by Alfred Schutz in Reflections on the Problem of Relevances.

This study raises a claim for a wider academic "acknowledged" awareness of the "objective" validity of emic "insider" understandings, especially in the controversial case under study in which "insiders" are artists, who are fighting for the survival struggle of all artists in the community to have the rights on their own work and destiny. Such a control immediately leads into the world current debate on the globalization of the world and of its markets. The "closed" structure of the art market raises the urgent need of a renegotiation of a new art contract which will allow "insider" community-based participations in the critical control of such an important human resource. "The Repatriation of Art" and "Route Correction" as well as "Open Call In Order to Survive" and "Open Call Against Art-Slaver-Isms," are some of Plexus concepts that express the metatheoretical survival concern of

participants of a correct shift in the human use of the human resources, by "insiders" signing a new contract of art as well as of a global well living.

"Art as human resource" is a concept of a paramount importance, non only for its incredible high and exploited financial value, but and first of all for its "well being" evolutionary capacity to modify human evolution.

In "The Politics of Aesthetic Inquiry", Ecker foresees the emerging of ideological issues within the multicultural debate:

Global debates over human rights have sensitized groups and individuals to resist intervention by outsiders as a bid for domination. In turn, curators, collectors, critics, artists, ethnographers, educators and other professionals are becoming increasingly self-conscious about the appropriation of cultural material. Today, even aesthetic contemplation at a distance is questioned. (10)

Final Remarks

The artist as researcher arriving to the end of this collective efforts that has made possible to gain an emic knowledge of Plexus and of its ongoing community-based art project "Plexus Black Box" which, while was re-emerging from a "frozen" time, was deconstructed for the need of the study. His close reading offers a model of a collective multi-arts open framework for global project, a Plexus coopera.

The coopera concept is described by the "insider" Rolando Politi in his recollection as follows:

Coopera concept: Artists in the first person create art works and mail them cross continents to other artists for their interventions. Interactions of two or more interventions create a coopera and can be created globally.

At some point when the music stops... the originals are collected in one location for exhibition and then the exhibit travels linking all participating artists across continents.

There is no one-point conclusion in this study, and the artist as researcher aware of it, and intentionally, following the open framework used to conduct the study, stops his emic understanding by introducing the emic openness and knowledge offered by the conscious act of reflection made in

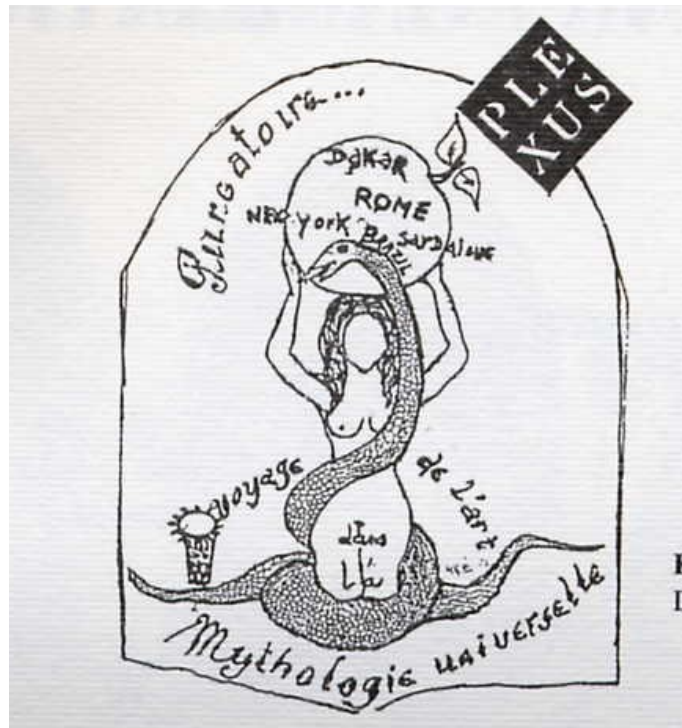
Dakar by the "insider" Kre M'Baye and expressed in his recollection:

Plexus is a tendency in direction of the universal of the civilization. It is a way to put together all people, it is a tendency to watch what happens in this planet with a consciousness of what happens, with no separation between the world and the human being. It is not an organization, it is more about a philosophy, a thought a proposition, a regard on how we deal with the issue of the human being. It is a tendency in direction of the unity, against any definitions or classifications which make separations.

Without unity, in the respect of the diversity and quality of the human being there is not democracy.

Figure 53

From Purgatorius to Paradise



Artwork by Kre M'Baye, Dakar, 1986.