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A MULTICULTURAL AESTHETIC INQUIRY INTO “PLEXUS BLACK BOX”  
AN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY-BASED ART PROJECT

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## ABSTRACT

This study is a multicultural aesthetic inquiry into the "Plexus Black Box," a community-based international art project.

Plexus, an international movement of artists and community intellectuals, has played a seminal role in the conception and realization of numerous large, international, interdisciplinary, collaborative, cross-cultural, multi-art events, which are an unexamined part of the contemporary history of art.

The collaborative art project under study, "Plexus Black Box," is related to a series of art events held in several communities around the world, beginning in 1982, engendering a spirit of cooperation and bridging the gap between universities and local communities.

The focus of Plexus is to raise the consciousness in the world community about the interdependencies of the arts, the well-being of individuals, and the reconciliation of cultural differences, through the extension and interaction of collaborative art events, bringing the community and the academy closer together, and linking the notion of "art" - as a culture-bound aesthetic experience - to the concept of "well being" - as a multicultural paradigm enhancing the quality of life in the community.

The inquiry provides an aesthetic interpretation of "Plexus Black Box" as well as a comprehensive historical account of Plexus activities.

The researcher, an "insider" of the project, applies David W. Ecker's model of "The Artist as Researcher: The Role of the Artist in Advancing Living Traditions in Art," within the current issues raised by Kenneth L. Pike and Marvin Harris in *Emics and Etics. The Insider/ Outsider Debate*.

Following John Dewey's Art as Experience perspective, "the artist as researcher" presents an emic or an "insider" aesthetic understanding of "Plexus Black Box," combining emic procedures with hermeneutic and deconstructionist interpretational methods. The inquiry offers not a "formal aesthetic" analysis of the object of the study but opens the possibility of an "insider" understanding of "Plexus Black Box" as a community-based art form.

The researcher applies the "double writing" model employed by the deconstructionist Jacques Derrida in *Margins of Philosophy*, and as "an insider" conducts a participatory hermeneutic inquiry following the interpretational historical perspective employed by Hans-Georg Gadamer in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, and by Alfred Schutz in *Reflections on the Problem of Relevance*, to accomplish such a hermeneutical task.

At this time, in a multicultural world, where different values and cultures clash, and individual and cultural identification are of paramount concern for all, the study outlines an open art model to grasp possibilities of global participation, by building bridges among individuals, communities and institutions.

The assumption of the study is that a more participatory process of understanding of community-based art experiences should be invaluable in developing local and global alternative strategies for the reinforcement of mutual respect necessary to cohabit with diversity, and enhancing the advancement of art as a paramount universal human resource for the well being of humankind.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## PREFACE

The researcher as an "insider" of the Plexus Black Box project offers in the following chapters his aesthetic inquiry as a contribution to multicultural understanding, but in a larger sense, it is an inquiry based upon all "insider" accounts of the experiences related to the many emerging issues raised by contemporary artists from the so called margins of the Artworld.

The model of "the artist as researcher" outlined by David W. Ecker supplied the methodology by which the researcher articulates his multicultural aesthetic inquiry as a pluralistic narrative made up of many "emic" understandings, with no privileged position.

Combining hermeneutical and deconstructionist strategies, this aesthetic inquiry strives to overcome the outworn notion of "autonomous art" by means of a more complex interdependent vision of art. Thus situated within the current modern and postmodern debate, the inquiry challenges the hierarchical Western notion of "Artworld." The study challenges the current notion that artistic identification is conferred on the artist by the "Artworld."

By claiming a community-based artistic identification, the study grounds art in the experience and in the local knowledge of "insiders."

The multicultural aesthetic inquiry, following a hermeneutical process of moving from misunderstanding to understanding, presents contingent (but not analytically necessary) aesthetic characteristics of "Plexus Black Box," within its community-based environment.

## CHAPTER I

### THE ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

#### Introduction

Plexus started its activities in 1982, in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan. It was at once an idea and a place, founded by two architects, an art critic and the present researcher in the role of cultural organizer. Over a period of fourteen years Plexus evolved to its present status as an international collaborative effort with the intention of bridging the gap between the community and the academy. The notion of well-being emerged as the link between art and the community. Plexus since its beginning was conceived as an interdisciplinary and multicultural project committed to the achievement of a heightened understanding of alternatives enhancing human experience. Over these years Plexus aim was achieved through the organization and documentation of large international collaborative arts events.

In its events Plexus encouraged, among all participants, face to face dialogue and creative and critical interaction. It continues to do so today. In Plexus events, artists, scientists, and audience, representing various cultures and ideologies, traversing separations of language, discipline, place, and individual differences, managed to create a complex multicultural art environment, intentionally bridging the gap between the community and the academy. Plexus events, involving on some occasions hundreds of artists and scientists, coming from different parts of the world, were fully financed by the participants themselves, without grants or market support.

During its years of activity, from 1982 to the present, Plexus has evolved a framework for global art projects moving into a multilateral information network, and possibly contributing to the development of an art movement expressly appropriate for a multicultural international complex society. But it would be difficult to label Plexus or group activities under existing art categories, especially because Plexus members intentionally resisted definitions.

In order to deal with such a complex series of events, the researcher identified "Plexus Black Box" as the subject of this study, because it encompassed all the events. "Plexus Black Box" was conceived in 1989 in Rome by the participants of the event 1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio

nel Pianeta Arte. The idea was metaphorically to "freeze" Plexus and its activities within a "black box," for the need of the historical survival of the movement, in order to be preserved for art history.

"Plexus Black Box" materially consists of records and relics of Plexus history and performances. Many records consist of compiled images made as frames of reference or "quotes" of other records. Over the years Plexus events have built one upon the other. Each event takes place in its own present but it is made up of past concepts and activities while it projects its own various parts into the future activities of Plexus.

"Plexus Black Box" is designed as an international travelling event, joined by local and international communities of artists and scientists. The project under study is a community-based art project, situating art in an expanded community and relating to broader heterogeneous multicultural environments.

"Plexus Black Box" encompasses an unending story of attempts made to build bridges with institutions not always ready for it. "Plexus Black Box" is a conscious act of recall of the struggle of the artists in the community, who are running ahead toward their own future. While the study is about the past and is thus historical, it is also about the future and thus hermeneutical. In the words of Heidegger:

Being futural gives time, cultivates the present and allows the past to be repeated in how it is lived. With regard to time, this means that *the fundamental phenomenon of time is the future*. In order to see this without selling it as an interesting paradox, each specific Dasein must maintain itself in its running ahead. In so doing it becomes manifest that the original way of dealing with time is not a measuring<sup>1</sup>.

By "freezing" Plexus within a conceptual black box, they are in effect defending their own, individual and collective, artistic and cultural identities, and the cultural survival of the group. Through documentation, the Plexus concepts, people and events are linked together. Therefore the nature of Plexus and in particular of "Plexus Black Box" is like a chain, its concepts connected together and ultimately representing one total persistent purpose: the linkage of art to the community and to the notion of well-being.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, The Concept of Time, trans. William McNeill, (Cambridge: Balckwell, 1992) 14E.

## Statement of the Problem

Because the researcher was part of the group which founded Plexus and is still an active participant of it, one may ask how an insider can conduct an objective inquiry.

One should quickly note before rushing to an answer, that the most secure scientific knowledge is nevertheless grounded in intersubjective beliefs supported by evidence publicly accessible. Thus the supposed methodological problem is resolved by having "insider" accounts of events intersubjectively validated as a constituent of the ongoing art project under study.

The researcher conducted a hermeneutical multicultural investigation of the primary sources of the study as "insiders" views of this ongoing art project, in order to investigate how in a critical aesthetic discourse they were related. The researcher approaches the task through a field survey of all existing and available Plexus sources which he knew by his "stock of knowledge at hand" as it was pointed out by Alfred Schutz.<sup>2</sup>

Given the large number of participants, records and relics of the project under study, dispersed in many places without any inventory, the first step was to identify the primary sources. One source was people. As an "insider" of the project, he applied the model of "the artist as researcher" proposed by David W. Ecker.<sup>3</sup> Only recently "insider" interpretations as emic accounts have begun to be recognized by the scientific community. This "insider" claim to validity is still contested as the current controversial debate between emics and etics points out.<sup>4</sup> The emic model, consistent with the model of the "artist as researcher" as well as with the community-based identity of the project under study, provides a unique "insider" understanding of "Plexus Black Box", supplied by members of that community in which the project is placed, as community-based art collaborative effort. Further, an etic method, reinforcing the "objectivity" of the study, is employed by the researcher by following a series of phenomenological hermeneutical strategies of interpretation as reported in the chapter III. Emic accounts are presented in Chapter IV, within a

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<sup>2</sup>Alfred Schutz, Reflections on the Problem of Relevance, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970) 66.

<sup>3</sup>David W. Ecker, "The Artist as Researcher: The Role of the Artist in Advancing Living Traditions in Art" First International Symposium on Living Traditions, eds. Boyd White and Lynn M. Hart ( Montreal: McGill University, 1990).

<sup>4</sup>Thomas N. Headland, Kenneth L. Pike, Marvin Harris, eds, Emics and Etics. The Insider/ Outsider Debate, (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1990)

"bifurcated writing"<sup>5</sup> format. This "bifurcated" format is the "double writing" employed by Jacques Derrida. (See figure 1.)

The researcher's "double reading" format allows the "outsider" interpreter to perform at the same time his hermeneutical task of reading together the "insider" recollections of Plexus participants and, at their margins, the emic insights provided by the researcher.

Derrida uses this double writing as one of the models of his postmodern thought strategy to overturn the Western hierarchy of the text. The researcher applies it to offer to the "outsider" reader all emic understandings together with the researcher's own interpretation, placed at their margins, with no predominance of a single central point of interpretation.

In Chapter V, an "insider" overall narrative of the history of "Plexus Black Box" by "the artist as researcher" provides a reflexive historical account of the project under study. In the last Chapter VI, a multicultural aesthetic interpretation of "Plexus Black Box," is derived by the researcher from his "close reading" of all "insider" understandings presented in Chapters IV and V. His interpretation is made not as a conclusion, but as an open and critical aesthetic discourse which has the aim to move a misunderstanding of the interwoven aesthetics of "Plexus Black Box" to its understanding as an open art form related to the complexity of contemporary art, within and outside the postmodern debate.

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<sup>5</sup>Jacques Derrida, Positions, trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981) 42.

Figure 1

Derrida Double Writing Example.

one must (know how to) destroy what one destroys.

Therefore, if they appear to remain marginal to some of the great texts in the history of philosophy, these ten writings *in fact* ask the question of the margin. Gnawing away at the border which would make this question into a particular case, they are to blur the line which separates a text from its controlled margin. They interrogate philosophy beyond its meaning, treating it not only as a discourse but as a determined text inscribed in a general text, enclosed in the representation of its own margin. Which compels us not only to reckon with the entire logic of the margin, but also to take an entirely other reckoning: which is doubtless to recall that beyond the philosophical text there is not a blank, virgin, empty margin, but another text, a weave of differences of forces without any present center of reference (everything—"history," "politics," "economy," "sexuality," etc.—said not to be written in books: the worn-out expression with which we appear not to have finished stepping backward, in the most regressive argumentations and in the most apparently unforeseeable places); and also to recall that the *written* text of philosophy (this time in its books) overflows and cracks its meaning.

To philosophize *à corps perdu*.<sup>13</sup> How did Hegel understand that?

Can this text become the margin of a margin? Where has the body of the text gone when the margin is no longer a secondary virginity but an inexhaustible reserve, the stereographic activity of an entirely other ear?

through the canal of a wound narrow but deep enough to involve the innermost muscles; whether it is that of an artist from the opera, cut from the heart of the rock, or fashioned in the most supple steel if it is that of a singer, emerging from the moist earth of a hothouse or stretched out in breaking glass filament if that of one of the creatures more readily called *cantatrices* than *chanteuses* (even though *cantateur*† is an unknown species); or whether it is the most vulgar voice, issuing from the most insignificant being for the most insipid ballad or most trivial refrain, mysterious is the voice that sings, in relation to the voice that speaks.

The mystery—if

† *Cantatrice* has the sense of an opera singer, a diva (a hothouse, glass-breaking voice), while *chanteuse* is simply a female singer. There is no masculine form *cantateur* corresponding to *cantatrice*.

13. TN. See the second epigraph above for Hegel's use of the expression *à corps perdu*. It means impetuously, passionately.

### Delimitations of the Study

Because the project under study is an ongoing activity, the artist as researcher chose to conclude his inquiry with the event A Contract to be Negotiated, Columbus Egg: The Living Plexus Black Box of "The Voyage of the Elisabeth," which took place on November 12, 1993, at the Rosenberg Gallery of New York University. There through the packaging of the artifacts on exhibition relating to previous Plexus events was symbolically sealed in two containers, collectively named "Plexus Black Box." This "Box" provided a temporal closure.

Due to the large number of Plexus participants living in different parts of the world, the researcher delimited his field research to the collection and interpretation of recollections only of those identified from records and relics of the project sealed at the Rosenberg Gallery, and who participated in more than one event.

No attempt was made by the artist as researcher to make a formal analysis of the art works in this study.

### Definitions

The following definitions will provide an initial grasp of the focus of the research:

Actual interest: is a form of relevance; the determination by the subject of the conditions under which the task of translating the unfamiliar into familiar terms is to be considered as solved; it depends on the circumstances and the situation within which the problems have arisen, and also upon the system of problems to which the specific one pertains.<sup>6</sup>

Aesthetics: is a field of study which is understood to include all studies of the arts and related types of experience from a philosophic, scientific, or other theoretical standpoint, including those of psychology, sociology, anthropology, cultural history, art criticism, and education. "The arts" include the visual arts, literature, music, and theater arts.<sup>7</sup>

Art: is a projection of the participant's own culture-bound aesthetic experience.

Community: is a social context defined by its participants.

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<sup>6</sup>Alfred Schutz, Reflections on the Problem of Relevance, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1970) 28.

<sup>7</sup>From the definition of the term "aesthetics" published in all issues of the Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism.



Community-Based Art Education: is a participatory effort to build a community which is infused with the arts. The essential difference between Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE) and Community-Based Art Education (CBAE) is that DBAE operates from "top down," presumably people in higher education know enough to set the categories, the methods, the subjects-matters, the contents and the objectives for all modes of education. This puts art education in the hands of the professors. CBAE presumably operates from "bottom up," the meaning of bottom does not refer to lower but it means more basic, in the sense of community, which would of course include art professors as members of the community.<sup>8</sup>

Emic: is an "insider" account, description, or analysis expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the native members of the culture whose beliefs and behaviors are being studied.<sup>9</sup>

Etic: is an "outsider" account, description, or analysis expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the community of scientific observers.<sup>10</sup> Familiarity: is something inherent to the already experienced things we speak of as familiar to us; the habit of the subject in recognizing, identifying, and choosing actual experiences under the types at hand in his actual stock of knowledge.<sup>11</sup>

Interpretative relevance: is a form of relevance, in virtue of which something is constituted as familiar by coherent types of previous experiences with which it might be compared.<sup>12</sup>

Living Traditions in Art: is a domain of aesthetic inquiry whose subject matter is located by its participants in terms of its qualities of significance to them .<sup>13</sup> For the purpose of this investigation

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<sup>8</sup> David W. Ecker, notes, Summer Institute on the Living Traditions in Art, New York University, November 15, 1993.

<sup>9</sup>James Lett, "Emics and Etics: Notes on the Epistemology of Anthropology" in Emics and Etics. The Insider!/Outsider Debate, eds.Thomas N. Headland, Kenneth L. Pike, Marvin Harris (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1990) 130.

<sup>10</sup>James Lett, "Emics and Etics: Notes on the Epistemology of Anthropology" in Emics and Etics. The Insider!/Outsider Debate, eds.Thomas N. Headland, Kenneth L. Pike, Marvin Harris (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1990) 130-131.

<sup>11</sup>Alfred Schütz. Reflections on the Problem of Relevance (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970) 25.

<sup>12</sup>Alfred Schütz. Reflections on the Problem of Relevance (New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1970) 36.

<sup>13</sup> David W. Ecker, notes, Summer Institute on the Living Traditions in Art, New York University , November 15, 1993.

only a nominal definition is appropriate given the diversity and complexity of artistic activities of all the cultures involved.

Multicultural Art Education: is a participation in the artistic activity of another culture for the purpose of understanding it on its own terms.<sup>14</sup>

Reflexivity: is a capacity of any system of signification to turn back upon itself, to make itself its own object by referring to itself: subject and object fuse <sup>15</sup>.

Stock of knowledge at hand: is the sedimentation of various previous activities of our mind, and these are guided by systems of prevailing actually operative relevances of different kinds.<sup>16</sup>

### The Need for the Study

Plexus has generated since 1982 numerous art events which are a significant but as yet an unexamined part of the contemporary history of art. Today there is no a comprehensive account of Plexus. More than 500 artists from all over the world have participated in this ongoing art project, yet there has been no scholarly examination of these art activities.

In times where in individual and cultural identification are of paramount concern to all ethnic groups and with small countries emerging after years of suppression to grasp the possibilities of global participation, this multicultural interpretative study seems of particular significance. In a multicultural environment, where different values and cultures clash, the study of the multicultural aesthetic aspects of "Plexus Black Box," as an international community-based effort, should prove to be invaluable for understanding how members of different cultures may communicate in spite of their different languages, and their cultural/political separations.

"Plexus Black Box" is an example of an art form that reinforces the individual while collaborating in group events. Contributions by artists coming from a vast mix of cultures, many of

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<sup>14</sup> David W. Ecker, " Cultural Identity, Artistic Empowerment, and the Future of Art in the Schools," Design for Arts in Education January-February 1990: 15.

<sup>15</sup> Barbara Myerhoff and Jay Ruby, Crack in the Mirror: Reflexive Perspectives in Anthropology (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982) 2.

<sup>16</sup> Alfred Schutz. Reflections on the Problem of Relevance (New Haven and London: Yale University Press. , 1970) 66.

them at the "margins" of the Artworld are of a very disparate nature, yet the thematic underlying structure accommodates them all.

By creating alternative channels of communication among cultural and ethnic groups, by bridging the academy and the community, connecting centers and margins, Plexus has provided a ground for individuals of different fields and cultures to make original contributions in the development of a international identification having its beginning in a community-based art project.

There is a great need to understand the characteristics of an art project of this kind, made as an open art form that relates specifically to the needs of our times. Plexus events have brought scientists, humanists, artists, and audience together in one place from all over the world, as multicultural participants, crossing separations, categorizations, and classifications. The cross-disciplinary nature of Plexus is directed against specialization and fragmentation.

The concept of the project under study and of the activities of Plexus can assist in the creation of a new multicultural environment for learning in art education, as Angiola Churchill states in Art for Preadolescents:

Because of the specialisation and fragmentation in our society, it is important that we integrate all aspects of education in order to strengthen the underlying unifying elements and ensure communication. No discipline can any longer afford to be insular, although this does not imply that its special quality will be sacrificed and lost in a vague amalgam of learning. Gradually--one hopes not too gradually--concepts new and unfamiliar to many educators--informality, new roles for teachers, shared power with children and the community, the necessity for creative expression--will be absorbed into our institutions and lead public education out of its present impasse (407).

The purpose of the project under study is to reinforce dialogue among individuals, separated communities of different cultures, classes, and genders, from different parts of the world, and create an improvement of the well-being of humankind, context-bound within the interdependent "fragile" and critical community-based environment in which each one of us lives and works. The significance of a study of this kind of project is made by its collaborative attempt to raise the consciousness in the community about the interdependence of art and well-being, a critical issue for the survival of humankind in its current critical path. Plexus has organized several international events on the theme of the "well being in the XXI Century," see documents in the appendix D.

This study attempts to respond by a careful cultural and artistic interpretation of the emerging interest in the issue of cultural identity and multiculturalism through the "artist in the first

person." This study clarifies how "the artist in the first person" was able to preserve in Plexus her/his sense of individuality while being a member of a collaborative effort.

"Plexus Black Box" evolved in many places, but grew, mainly in the art communities of New York, Rome, Dakar, Cagliari (Sardinia), and Amsterdam. In each of the locations mentioned the activities developed according to the specific characteristics of the locations and the cultural aspects of that particular community. As a consequence the invention of new forms and ideas arose in the activities developed.

John Dewey claims in Art As Experience the interdependence of art and environment:

The first great consideration is that life goes on in an environment; not merely in it but because of it, through interaction with it. No creature lives merely under its skin; its subcutaneous organs are means of connection with what lies beyond its bodily frame, and to which, in order to live, it must adjust itself, by accommodation and defence but also by conquest. At every moment, the living creature is exposed to dangers from its surroundings, and at every moment, it must draw upon something in its surroundings to satisfy its needs. The career and destiny of a living being are bound up with its interchanges with its environment, not externally but in the most intimate way (13).

Lucy Lippard in her Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America underlines the difficulty of making multicultural exchanges bridging center and margins:

The subject of the relationship between perceived center and margins in the United States is both unavoidable and curiously unapproachable, veiled as it is by the rhetoric of democracy and liberal "multiculturalism."... Ethnocentrism in the arts is balanced on a notion of Quality that "transcends boundaries" - and is identifiable only by those in power. According to this lofty view, racism has nothing to do with art; Quality will prevail; so-called minorities just haven't got it yet. The notion of Quality has been the most effective bludgeon on the side of homogeneity in the modernist and postmodernist periods, despite twenty-five years of attempted revisionism. (7)

Plexus events were created by artists and scientists interacting together and with the environment. They had in common the need to experiment with new forms of communication, able to traverse disciplines and cultures.

McFee and Degge in Art, Culture, and Environment: A Catalyst for Teaching raises the issue of the need of art and science interaction for a better understanding of the human environment:

The long-standing division between science and art is one of attitude. We learn to identify with one more than the other, know more about one than the other. The knowledge, associations, and comfort we find with what is familiar tend to make us uncomfortable, alienated, and often distrustful of the other. Both science and art are attempts to understand humanity and environment, and both give us valuable, useful information. In art education they have to be used together (322).

In response to this need, the project under study focuses on the need to increase interactive dialogue between artists and scientists in order to assist in bringing well-being and reconciliation to diverse communities.

Jonas Salk underlines this need to bring together artists and scientists in his The Next Evolutionary Step in the Ascent of Man in the Cosmos:

Could we bring biologist and humanists together in one place for the enhancement each could have upon the other and thereby further guide the course of human history ? How long could we keep the epistemology of science and the epistemology of human experience apart without jeopardising our future through failing to realise the importance of science and art have for each other? (238)

From the early 60's through the late 80's, artists as well as scientists have significantly challenged their perspectives about the nature and purpose of their artistic or scientific method.

A significant question, of course, has to do with the artistic identity of "Plexus Black Box," the extent to which its related records can be considered works of art, and the emergence of a Plexus art as an art form. Various emic responses to this question are presented in chapter IV. This study should serve to elucidate and to bring better understanding to the artistic processes which have characterized "Plexus Black Box."

The structure and concepts of "Plexus Black Box" is analysed as an emerging form of art expression, one which is more democratic and appropriate for a multicultural art world, one in which voices not usually heard, at the margins of the Western modern aesthetic theories, now have an opportunity to speak. The main characteristic of "Plexus Black Box" is that it is like an accumulation of ideas on a theme created in communities about subjects of interest to them, with materials of all kinds that the artist claims appropriate for her/his expression and where the ordinary standards of "modernism" or any other "ism", claimed significant by the established art world, are not taken into consideration. As a result there is a crossing of the traditional boundaries of criticism, existing art definitions, labels and art categories. Plexus works of arts were exhibited outside the frames and realms of museums, galleries and other conventional and commercial institutions. They were addressed more to create participation in terms of life and social issues than to address "art for the sake of art." While in the 60's and in the 70's artists chose to break art making conventions, the artists of Plexus in the 80's were also turning their backs on traditional art expression. Not only was their art not traditional, but also not saleable and outside the

realms of museums, galleries and other conventional and commercial institutions. Many events of Plexus took place in communities or at historic sites where social crimes had been perpetuated. There the records and relics of Plexus were packaged as works of art, in the form of multi-media installations and postmodern ritual art performances. Since 1986, Plexus is promoting the opening of an Art World Bank in Goree-Dakar, next to the historical House of the Slaves. In recognition of its efforts the minister of culture of Senegal in a letter to the researcher states:

I would like to express to you my satisfaction for the "heureuse" (positive) project that you have started in direction of the dialogue of cultures and a better understanding among all people of the world.

The community-based art project under study underlines the need to fight against the slavery of the "isms" in art through a new open participatory art paradigm made by the artists of the community. Suzi Gablick foresees this new kind of model of artistic participation, on which Plexus is formulated, in her The Reenchantment of Art :

I believe what we will see in the new few years is a new paradigm based on the notion of participation, in which art will begin to redefine itself in terms of social relatedness and ecological healing, so that artists will gravitate toward different activities, attitudes and roles than those that operated under the aesthetics of modernism (27).

## Method

The researcher employed the model of "the artist as researcher" as it was presented by Ecker in "The Artist as Researcher: The Role of the Artist in Advancing Living Traditions in Art," and in particular as it was articulated during his graduate courses and seminars at New York University on "Living Traditions in Art." The first sequences of procedural steps outlined by the model are: reading the primary sources in the literature; writing an annotated bibliography; studying examples of medium or genre in museums; knowing insiders of the field; developing files of articles, newspaper clippings, reproductions, etc.; writing a glossary of technical terms; writing an outline of the proposed field research; asking for critiques by insiders and outsiders of the field; re-writing and revising the outlining of the field research. As it is described by Ecker in "The Possibility of a Multicultural Art Education":

As artist-researchers their field research typically involves observation of artistic activity in its cultural setting, interviews with artists, participation in the activity if possible, recording

of events on tape or film, taking notes during or following events, and so on, until they have the knowledge, skills, or critical judgments that advance the art in some way. (15)

As an insider, and in order to accomplish such a task of describing a large quantity of information collected by him since 1986 as part of his field research, "the researcher as artist" kept his notes in a series of chronological log books. Keeping notes as an "insider" account was not a simple task.

Malinowski pointed out in his controversial A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term:

I also thought about problems of keeping a diary. How immensely difficult it is to formulate the endless variety of things in the current of a life. Keeping a diary as a problem of psychological analysis is: to isolate the essential elements, to classify them (from what point of view?), then, in describing them indicate more or less clearly what is their actual importance at the given moment, proportion; my subjective reaction, etc. (247)

Starting his field research, the researcher first examined all Plexus sources available, dating back to 1982. Among those were records, relics and interviews with participants in Plexus events. He then identified and organised in a chronological order the primary sources of "Plexus Black Box."

The procedures for historical researches described by Barzun and Graff in The Modern Researcher (165-166) were used by the researcher to organise various documents within a chronological categorical inventory made by records as intentional transmitters of fact, and relics as unpremeditated transmitters of fact. His need for accuracy made him double-check all sources that he used, through verification research procedures such as comparison copies with sources, one of the fundamental ways of verifying complex facts, together with disentanglement, identification and clarification procedures, to verify the attribution of a name to a source, described by Barzun and Graff (109-144). Verification procedures were useful to double control the outline of a chronological and categorical inventory of Plexus primary sources. Following verification procedures he identified and organised records and relics from Plexus events made from 1982 to the present, related consistently to the study, identifying if there was an underlying theme or themes, unifying them into a single non stop event. Various documents related to several different events are being studied as part of one single stream of the project under study.

The researcher contacted all available Plexus participants, within the delimitation of the study, to ask their recollections. To them the researcher sent a letter requesting their participation, see copy in appendix B, and by phone he solicited their recollections. Few participants answered

with their written recollection. The gap was filled by the researcher who managed to record their oral recollections and make transcripts of them. Applying the model of "artist as researcher", he made room for suggestions and criticism by arranging for having sent the transcriptions to the participants before presenting them in this dissertation. By turning his experience into a narrative discourse, he followed and modified in part the field procedural steps described by Edward M.

Bruner in Ethnography as Narrative:

First we tell the people why we are there, what information we are seeking, and how we intend to use the data. We do this directly, by explaining our project and by our behaviour, by the questions we ask and the activities we attend. As the people respond to our questions, we begin the ethnographic dialogue, the complex interactions and exchanges that lead to the negotiation of the text. In the second telling we take this verbal and visual information and process it, committing it to writing in our field diaries. This transcription is not easy. There is necessarily a dramatic reduction, condensation and fragmentation of data. In the third telling the audience consists of our colleagues, who provide feedback as we prepare our materials for publication and here the story becomes even more prominent. There is, of course, a fourth telling-when other anthropologists read what we have written and summarise it in class lectures and in their own publication. (147 -148 )

The researcher, aware that he had to cast his multicultural investigation with the community-based nature of art project under study, modified the 3rd etic telling step of Bruner by inserting first the emic move of bringing back to the sources the data collected from them, in this case to the community of Plexus participants, to be emically validated by their verification. Only after he accomplished this emic step did he feel sure to move forward, following Bruner's etic step to bring the data to the scientific community.

Bruner acknowledges narrative ethnographies as coauthored works between the anthropologist and his informants. The researcher did the same following Bruner's acknowledgment. He recognizes the coauthorship of all Plexus "insiders" who have shared with him their experiences and contributed with their emic understanding to make this multicultural study feasible. Bruner points out:

Our ethnographies are coauthored, not simply because informants contribute data to the text, but because, as I suggested earlier, ethnographer and informant come to share the same narratives. (148)

Bruner further in dealing with the question of the coauthorship and of the sharing participation between insiders and outsiders, within their emic and etic distinction, raises the problem of the separation of identity between subject of the research and the object of it, which deals directly with the researcher's problem of this study:



We wonder if it is their story or ours. Which is the inside and which the outside view, and what about the distinction between emic and etic?...Some scholars make a sharp distinction between the ethnographer as subject and the native peoples as the object of an investigation. To the extent that we see the ethnographer as an outsider looking in, the privileged stranger who can perceive patterns not apparent to those within the system, then we further magnify the separation between anthropologist as subject and indigene as object. We have long recognized that it is difficult to obtain an accurate description of the object, to know the true nature of the outside world....We have recognized a problem with the subject, the anthropologist, but this tends to dissolve into details of personal bias, individual personality traits, and selective perception-after all, we are only human. We also have dealt with subject-object relations in another way, by suggesting that the object of our ethnography is constituted by a Western mode of thought, by our language, and that we have created the category of the native or the concept of the primitive. (149)

The emic accounts by Plexus participants are reported in chapter IV and are used as primary sources of this multicultural study.

The methodological problem of interpreting "insider" narratives made by Plexus participants was managed by combining emic and etical procedures presented by Kenneth L. Pike, and Marvin Harris in Emics and Etics. The Insider/Outsider Debate. For Pike an "emic" unit is as follows:

An emic unit, in my view, is a physical or mental system treated by insiders as relevant to their system of behavior and as the same emic unit in spite of etic variability. (28)

He further describes several features of an "emic" unit:

Appropriateness of an emic unit includes the feature of its relevant occurrence in relation to the total cultural pattern of an individual or

society (e.g., involving the purposes of a person in relation to the set of philosophical presuppositions shared with his or her culture). And such a patterned whole is itself a high-level emic unit (e.g., an emic world view, or the structure of an individual's activities and attitudes as related to a discipline such as anthropology). (29)

The researcher follows the claim by Pike that it is possible for an insider to apply both emic and etic procedures.

I view the emic knowledge of a person's local culture somewhat as Polanyi views bicycle riding. A person knows how to act without necessarily knowing how to analyze his action. When I act, I act as an insider; but to know, in detail, how I act (e.g., the muscle movements), I must secure help from an outside disciplinary system. To *use* the emics of nonverbal (or verbal) behavior I must act like an insider; to *analyze* my own acts, I must look at (or listen to) material as an outsider. But just as the outsider can learn to act like an insider, so the insider can learn to analyze like an outsider. (33-34)

Marvin Harris argues, in dealing with the validity of Pike's claim of the feasibility of insiders becoming outsiders and of outsiders becoming insiders, as follows:

I have always stressed the feasibility, indeed the tactical necessity, of training participants to carry out etic observation. And like Pike, I regard the ability of the outsider to talk, think, and act like an insider (as judged by insider) to be a hallmark of an emic account. Perhaps what Pike is getting at is the distinction between observers and participants as

mutable categories. If so, I would disagree on the ground that observers constitute a scientific community whose status is not normally altered by learning how to talk, or act like the people they are studying. Normally, what happens is that they simply become better observers. (77)

John W. Berry, in Emics and Etics. The Insider/Outsider Debate, presents the data collected with different emic and etic procedures as not part of a rigid dichotomy, " but often present the same data from two points of view". (87)

The researcher as an "insider" employed a reflexive double mirror attitude to try to gain the necessary etic and emic detachment from the object of his study. This attitude is clearly described by Myerhoff and Ruby in A Crack in the Mirror:

Without the acute understanding, the detachment from the process in which one is engaged, reflexivity does not occur. Merely holding up a

single mirror is not adequate to achieve this attitude. The mirrors must be doubled, creating the endless regress of possibilities, opening out into infinity, dissolving the clear boundaries of a "real world" (3).

The researcher following this horizon used both perspectives in managing the field research of this study. He methodologically started as an "outsider" organizing with an etic behaviour the research and of its field, then as an "insider" he moved to an emic understanding made as a relevant shift of paradigm providing a solution of the problem stated in the beginning of the dissertation.

As a consequence of the general crisis of the contemporary scientific thought, this shift of paradigms in ethnographical inquiries is described in Anthropology as Cultural Critique. An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences by George E. Marcus and Michael M. J. Fischer as a crisis of description and of representation:

The two related characteristics of this crisis are, first, disarray in attempts to build general and historically comprehensive theories that would subsume all piecemeal research, and second, a widespread perception of a fundamentally changing world for which tried-and-true "base" concepts that have served empirical research, such as class, culture, the social actor, among others, no longer work as well. The consequences for the individual scholar have been twofold. First, he has assumed responsibility for defining the significance of his own particular projects the general theoretical umbrella of justification of the field no longer adequately does this. Theory and purpose in research are thus far more personalized, and this defines the experimental quality of both ethnography and other related kinds of writing in contemporary genres of cultural criticism. And second, cultural critics focus in on details of social life to find in them a redefinition of the phenomena to be explained in uncertain times, and thus to reconstruct fields from the bottom up, from the problem of description (or really of representation) back to general theory which has grown out of touch with the world on which it seeks to comment. (118)

During historical times having had a crisis of representation, like the contemporary period in which we live and under which "Plexus Black Box" has originated, there is a shift of paradigms.

This shift occurs when they are insufficient to deal with the crisis, not offering a secure solution of the problem at hand which eludes dominant theories and paradigms. Paradigms then lose their authority and legitimacy.

Thomas S. Kuhn in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions points out that the crises are "a necessary precondition" for new theories to emerge and challenge scientists to confront themselves with "anomalies" and to provide answers to contemporary questions raised by the cultural crisis of our times and the shifting of paradigms. The historical paradigm's role is pointed out by Kuhn as follows:

Previously, we had principally examined the paradigm's role as a vehicle for scientific theory. In that role it functions by telling the scientist about the entities that nature does and does not contain and about the ways in which those entities behave. That information provides a map whose details are elucidated by mature scientific research. And since nature is too complex and varied to be explored at random, that map is as essential as observation and experiment to science's continuing development. Through the theories they embody, paradigms prove to be constitutive of the research activity. They are also, however, constitutive of science in other respects, and that is now the point. In particular, our most recent examples shows that paradigms provide scientists not only with a map but also with some of the directions essential for map-making. In learning a paradigm the scientist acquires theory, methods, and standards together, usually in an inextricable mixture. Therefore, when paradigms change, there are usually significant shifts in the criteria determining the legitimacy both of problems and of proposed solutions. (109)

The researcher changed his methodological field procedures at hand by moving from an etic perspective to an emic closer to the nature of a multicultural study and in particular to this study and of the "insider" identity of the researcher. This shift of perspective also changed his view on "insider" sources. This change of mode is clearly described by Kuhn as follows:

Led by a new paradigm, scientists adopt new instruments and look in new places. Even more important, during this revolutions scientists see new and different things when looking with familiar instruments in places they have looked before. It is rather as if the professional community had been suddenly transported to another planet where familiar objects are seen in a different light and are joined by unfamiliar ones as well. (111)

Following this emic understanding "the artists as researcher" started to become more aware of the relevance of the "insiders" accounts. Plexus tribal talk provides an "insider" sense of understanding, which sometimes from an "outsider" understanding is not understandable. Ecker in The Artistic Process as Qualitative Problem Solving points out the relevance of "insider" accounts.

A close examination of the shop talk and the work of the studio will provide certain data about the process of constructing an art object. These generalisations will be expanded to a level of abstraction inclusive of the immediacies of any given artistic production. I will call the latter qualitative problem solving. It is my contention that careful study of what painters do when ordering their artistic means and ends, as well as to what they say they are doing,

will provide the bases for significantly improving our generalisations about education in the arts (284).

The analysis by the researcher of this complex of understandings, from different inside and outside points of view, of the "Plexus Black Box" was considered a problem-solution-problem continuum with the artistic process from which it developed. Ecker further points out:

By extending this analysis of qualitative relationships it is conceivable that the history of art could be viewed as a record of the highest achievements of man's qualitative problem solving behaviour. If this conception of the art process as a problem-solution-problem continuum is warranted by the qualitative evidence of art history, much of the shop talk between artists is verbal evidence. For shop talk is largely a by product of their mutual problems of painting or sculpting. The words incorporated into this shop talk have common sense meanings, or, rather, sense common to fellow artists (285).

The researcher, since 1986, following as an insider the artistic process from which in 1989 "Plexus Black Box" originated, kept a phenomenological approach in writing his notes as it is described by Ecker in Introduction: Instituting Qualitative Evaluation in the Arts:

First, we attend as completely and as fully as possible to the object or event presented. Second, we write out a full description of the experience we just had. Third, we edit what we have written to indicate what upon further reflection we consider to be the essential character of the experience (14).

The researcher was conscious of the fact that such a continuous inquiry on Plexus and on what in Plexus he was doing as Plexus 23s, which was his "insider" identity as Plexus international coordinator as well as a historic founder, was interfering with the natural process of the Plexus art project. In the beginning of Plexus networking artistic development each participant chose a number of individual identification. Historical founders chose this individual identification code number in order to underline the individual identity of the artist in the context of the group.

The researcher as an insider was aware of the correlation between object and subject as well as of relevant interferences in scientific investigations made by the same investigation tools.

Idhe points out in Experimental Phenomenology. An Introduction how object and subject are deeply correlate:

In traditional philosophies, a distinction is usually made between object and the subject that knows the object. Husserl transformed this distinction into a correlation of what is experienced with its mode of being experienced. (42)

The artist as researcher was aware of the need to have at the beginning of his inquiry a radical suspicion of the immediate validity of his methodological interpretative approach, as it was pointed out by Gadamer in The Hermeneutics of Suspicion:

Our efforts at understanding can be seen from the point of view of the suspicion that our first approach - as a prescientific one - is not valid and that consequently we need the help of scientific methods to overcome our first impressions. (58)

The researcher as interpreter, and in the case under study he is also an insider, has his own historicity which points to a specific angle of interpretation, "an interpretative participation," as Gadamer states in The Hermeneutics of Suspicion. Interpretation as a process of "participation" is determined by a widespread and ongoing cultural processes of understanding, made by approximation and the overcoming of errors, in which the identity of the interpreter is always partly constitutive of this hermeneutical process of understanding as Gadamer states:

"Participation" is a strange word. Its dialectic consists of the fact that participation is not taking parts, but in a way taking the whole. Everybody who participates in something does not take something away, so that the others cannot have it. The opposite is true: by sharing, by our participating in the things in which we are participating, we enrich them; they do not become smaller, but larger. The whole life of tradition consists exactly in this enrichment so that life is our culture and our past: the whole inner store of our lives is always extending by participating (64).

No method can transcend the interpreter's own historicity. Even if we can achieve distance, Gadamer argues that "we actually interpret an interpretation".

In The Relevance of the Beautiful (68), he claims that "interpretation" points in a specific direction, rather than to open to any other variety of directions. Each interpretation is placed within its own historical context, a world made by a particular time and space.

In Reason in the Age of Science, Gadamer describes the historical shifting in hermeneutics as a theory of interpretation since when it was applied "as a technique for overcoming difficulties in troublesome texts."

What has to be held up as a first determination that will do justice to modern hermeneutics in contrast to the traditional kind is this notion that a philosophical hermeneutics is more interested in the questions than the answers - or better, that it interprets statements as answers to questions that it is its role to understand. That is not all. Where does our effort to understand begin? Why are we interested in understanding a text or some experience of the world, including our doubts about patent self-interpretations? Do we have a free choice about these things? Is it at all true that we follow our own free decision whenever we try to investigate or interpret certain things? Free decision? A neutral, completely objective concern? At least the theologian would surely have objections here and say, "Oh no! (106)

He further describes the endlessness of the task of the hermeneutical procedures in approaching the interpretation of a text:

This first step of hermeneutic endeavor, especially the requirement of going back to the motivating questions when understanding statements, is not a particularly artificial procedure. On the contrary, it is our normal practice. If we have to answer a question and

we cannot understand the question correctly (but we do know what the other wants to know), then we obviously have to understand better the sense of the question. And so we ask in return why someone would ask us that. Only when I have first understood the motivating meaning of the question can I even begin to look for an answer. It is not artificial in the least to reflect upon the presuppositions implicit in our questions. On the contrary, it is quite artificial to imagine that statements fall down from heaven and that they can be subjected to analytic labor without once bringing into consideration why they were stated and in what way they are responses to something. That is the first, basic, and infinitely far-reaching demand called for in any hermeneutical undertaking. Not only in philosophy or theology but in any research project, it is required that one elaborate an awareness of the hermeneutic situation. (107)

Further he clearly points out that the elaboration of this awareness of the hermeneutical situation at hand requires the insight understanding of its endless process:

The elaboration of the hermeneutic situation, which is the key to methodical interpretation, has a unique element to it. The first guiding insight is to admit of the endlessness of this task. To imagine that one might ever attain full illumination as to his motives or his interests in questions is to imagine something impossible. In spite of this, it remains a legitimate task to clarify what lies at the basis of our interests as far as possible. Only then are we in a position to understand the statements with which we are concerned, precisely insofar as we recognize our own question in them....The task of understanding is not merely that of clarifying the deepest unconscious grounds motivating our interest but above all that of understanding and explicating them in the direction and limits indicated by our hermeneutic interest. (108)

The idea of the validity of the scientific method is by Gadamer in Reason in the Age of

Science challenged:

It was especially the idea of method, or of securing the path of knowledge in accord with the guiding ideal of certainty, that brought a unified meaning of knowing and knowledge to the fore. This meaning no longer stood in the taken-for-granted context of the tradition of our earlier knowledge of the world. (156)

The researcher, dealing with his own lived experience of "Plexus Black Box" and with those of other Plexus insiders, performed an ongoing first-hand understanding of the complex of questions raised by this study.

Don Ihde describes in Experimental Phenomenology. An Introduction a series of operational rules to be followed in the first level of a phenomenological investigation.

The first operational rule, then, is to attend to the phenomena of experience as they appear. A parallel rule, which makes attention more rigorous, may be stated in Wittgensteinian form: *Describe, don't explain..* (34)

Ihde points out as second rule the delimitation of the field of experience:

What is important to note at this juncture is that one must carefully delimit the field of experience in such a way that the focus is upon describable experience as it shows itself. (35-36)

The third rule for Ihde is the *horizontalization* of all phenomena as "'equally real' within the limits of their givenness."

This procedure prevents one from deciding too quickly that some things are more real or fundamental than other things. (37)

Idhe introducing the second level of a phenomenological investigation by looking for the essential features of the phenomena, referred not just as particularities, presents the fourth hermeneutic rule which is "*Seek out structural or invariant features of the phenomena.*" (39)

So far, I have been discussing *phenomenological reductions*, those methodological devices that clear the field and specify how it is to be approached. (41)

In "Aesthetic Inquiry" by Ecker, Kaelin et al., the phenomenological procedure of the "epoché" is pointed out as a device for "distinguishing relevant from irrelevant statements about the nature of the aesthetic object."

American phenomenologists, in particular Kaelin, have interpreted Husserl's *epoché* as a technique for establishing relevance in statements of criticism. As Husserl developed the technique, practicing the "phenomenological epoché" entailed the suspension of what he called the "natural attitude." This latter term is used to refer to the life conditions of ordinary humans relating to the objects of their natural environment, interpreted either through the categories of common sense or of scientific explanation. (583-584)

Ecker and Kaelin describe the epoché technique as able to allow the subject to suspend his natural attitude in describing an object and to attend merely to the "qualities of the object in question as they appear to one's conscious attention," introducing in this way John Dewey's notion of "felt quality of the immediate."

Therefore, by "bracketing out" all the non-phenomenal characteristics of the appearances of the natural object such as its species, any of its supposed causes, or putative explanations associated with its existence, one is left with what John Dewey referred to as the "felt quality of the immediate."...

The function of the *epoché* is to close off all irrelevancies that may occur to an appreciator as he attends to the qualitative base of the aesthetic expression before him. To practice the *epoché*, one is enjoined from referring to the properties of the object qua physical or to any other associations which his perception may invoke, but which are not controlled by the qualitative structure he perceives. (584)

In Phenomenology as a Way of Illuminating Dance Maxine Sheets-Johnstone points out that the hermeneutical phenomenological approach is a mode of inquiry valid for what concerns "to trace out foundational connections at the heart of the phenomenon"(142) such as beginnings, endings, and passages referring to the history of art. She further argues:

To do a phenomenological-hermeneutical study, one must be in touch with actual lived experiences of the phenomenon one is investigating and with the beliefs, attitudes, and values surrounding those experiences; it is through an analysis of first-hand accounts of beliefs, attitudes, values, and experiences that foundational changes in thinking and praxis are revealed. (143)

The researcher, in order to *grasp as such* foundational *change*, followed the hermeneutical and phenomenological methodological procedures pointed out by Alfred Schutz in Reflections on the Problem of Relevance, shifting continuously the focus of his attention, going back and forward from the margins of his pre-known kernel of an insider of the project, in order to overcome the doubt of the reliability of first impressions. As an insider already with the "stock of knowledge at hand" of "Plexus Black Box," he intentionally and continuously changed his way of looking to the sources, as within an hermeneutical circle, performing an ongoing dialectic process, from misunderstanding to understanding, from the idea of the whole to the perception of the parts of it.

Schutz defines a "stock of knowledge at hand" as follows:

[It] is the sedimentation of various previous activities of our mind, and these are guided by systems of prevailing actually operative relevances of different kinds. These activities lead to the acquisition of habitual knowledge which is dormant, neutralized, but ready at any time to be reactivated (66).

Schutz refers to interpretative methodology as the "proper determination of what is interpretationally relevant with respect to a previously prevailing topic" (129). As the sedimentation of various previous activities of his mind, the stock of knowledge at hand of the researcher as interpreter determined a system of interpretational, topical and motivational relevances, which as Alfred Schutz introducing the notion of "stock of knowledge at hand", has its roots in the sedimented experiences of the interpreter, and upon which depends the process of understanding from misunderstanding.

The system of relevances of the artist as researcher, which as Schutz points out, prevailing at any particular autobiographical moment, set guides for actions by which decisions of the investigation were made and which, in turn, determined the horizon of the thematic field of the research, by bringing in marginal material from the background.

Motivational relevances lead to the constitution of the "interest" situation, which in turn determines the systems of topical relevances. The latter bring material which was horizontal or marginal into the thematic field, thus determining the problems for thought and action for further investigation, selected from the background which is, ultimately, the world which is beyond question and taken for granted. These topical relevances also determine the level or limits for such investigation required for producing knowledge and familiarity for the problem at hand. Thus, the system of interpretational relevances becomes established, and this leads to the determination of the typicality of our knowledge. (66)

The artist as researcher in the preparatory procedures, as a necessary condition to challenge his first effort at understanding, in order to *grasp as such* the living act of his experience,



performed a series of artificial voluntary acts of reflection to explore intrinsic relevant structures which create several "provinces of reality" within "Plexus Black Box" was experienced.

Although experienced as a unity, what I am doing is not one single activity; it is rather a set of heterogeneous activities, each of them taking place in its own appropriate medium. This set of activities is itself structured into theme and horizon....It is the predominance of the theme which creates the apparent unification of this set of activities, and it bestows the main accent of reality upon the realm of theoretical contemplation....(10)

The researcher as his first step to identify what was thematic, following Schutz, selected in a serendipitous way one of the Plexus activities or provinces, in order gain full attention, if only momentarily to start his reflection.

In truth we are always living and acting simultaneously in several of these provinces, and to select one can merely mean that we are making it so to speak our "home base," "our system of reference," our paramount reality in relation to which all others receive merely the accent of derived reality - namely, they become horizontal, ancillary, subordinate in relation to what is the prevailing theme. (11)

The artist as researcher, as an insider of the project under study, applied his "stock of knowledge at hand" by selecting as first "home base" the province of Plexus 23s, which is the identity under which the researcher as an "insider" operates in Plexus. It allowed him to assume the "counterpointal structure" and the "artificial split" of the unity of his personality, necessary to accomplish such a task as it is described by Schutz.

It is this "counterpointal structure" of our personality and therewith of our stream of consciousness which is the corollary of what has been called in other connections the *schizophrenic hypothesis of the ego* - namely the fact that in order to make something thematic and another thing horizontal we have to assume an artificial split of the unity of our personality. (12)

The researcher started from the "actual interest" of Plexus 23s his performance of the analysis of the system of relevances, from the structurization of a voluntary "artificial" thematic center and surrounding horizontal margins made by other "insider" relevances.

In our mental activities we are directed exclusively toward the theme of the field of consciousness - that is, toward the problem we are concerned with, the object of our interest or attention, in short toward the topical relevances. Everything else is in the margin, the horizon, and especially all the habitual possessions we have called the stock of knowledge at hand. The motives for our actions are also in the margin of the field, whether the motives be of the in-order-to type (beyond or before the topically relevant theme) or the because type (which belongs essentially to our past and leads to the building up of the chain of in-order-to motives governing the determination of the theme or topic). (67)

"The actual interest" of Plexus 23s by the artist as researcher, limiting the "level of investigation", and "depending upon the autobiographical and situational circumstances of the

individual", created the borderline of the segment placed under question. Schutz points out that there are not isolated questions, each is interrelated with the other, and are interpretationally relevant those elements, implicit or hidden in the margin of the field, implicit in the inner and outer horizons of the topic, which in the ongoing process of reflection may become topically relevant of the thematic center or *kernel*, made by the sedimentation of an experience which has its own history.

It is also obvious that I may at any time turn to what is implicit or hidden in these horizons (to what is in the margin of the field) and bring such elements into the thematic kernel (i.e. make thematic what has been only operative or marginal). (68)

In order to change the conditions of observation it is necessary to act *in such a way* that the decision of how to act is part of a "chain of interrelated motivational relevances". Schutz argues that "what has to be done is motivated by that for which it is to be done, the latter being motivationally relevant for the former." The artist as researcher had to learn to examine more carefully "Plexus Black Box," from inside and outside his own understanding, in order to shift his attention of focus *in such a way* "that data, which were at the margins, could be drawn into the thematic kernel." He had to "weigh" how new marginal materials produced in the course of his ongoing inside and outside actual process of understanding were interpretatively relevant, in order to determine the impact of circumstantial modifications in the thematic kernel.

The system of relevances proposed by Schutz to deal with the problem of this interpretative decision as sedimentation of previous experiences was used by the researcher. Schutz claims that this system of interrelationships among types of relevances should not be experienced chronologically separated.

Our study thus show that we cannot bestow a privileged position upon one of the three systems of relevances. On the contrary, any of them may become the starting point for bringing about changes in the other two. (70)

The artist as researcher, in order to gain more freedom from his stock of knowledge at hand, and aware of his first artificial selection performed at the beginning in selecting the kernel which was leading his methodological hermeneutical process, continuously created different observational conditions of looking new "insider" additional interpretatively relevant materials, until when the problem at hand he felt to have sufficiently clarified and solved for the purpose at hand.

On the other hand, it is quite possible that a shift in the system of interpretational relevances - as with the introduction of a new concept - becomes the starting point for building up a set of new motivational or topical relevances which do not thus far pertain to the familiar stock of knowledge at hand. (70)

Schutz claims that the distinction of three systems of relevances, as three aspects of a single set of a phenomenon, is useful in the clarification of the constitutive process of understanding: through the system of topical relevances, in the clarification of the concept of value and of the freedom of the interpreter in choosing the values by which to be guided; through the system of interpretational relevances, in the clarification of verification, invalidation, and falsification of propositions; through the system of motivational relevances, in the clarification of the intersubjective understanding and personality structure.

The researcher, in accordance with the emic paradigm shift operated in looking at "insiders" sources as it is described previously, in Chapter IV "looks" at collected accounts by Plexus participants with a deconstructionist lens, overturning the hierarchical setting and looking of texts of Western philosophers, as it is pointed out by Jacques Derrida in Positions: "To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment (41).

The researcher, by placing his interpretation at the margins of the "insiders" accounts to produce a valid multicultural study, in Chapter IV methodologically challenges the traditional and central hierarchical setting of Western modern philosophical inquiries which give to the interpreter a dominant position. Conceiving this dominant position as a culturally context-bound one the researcher presents as equally relevant all "insider" understandings as significant components of his multicultural hermeneutical aesthetic inquiry.

The placing at the margins of texts interpretational accounts is an effective deconstructive move, as Jacques Derrida claims in Margins of Philosophy "in order to leave irreversible marks"(xxii), which becomes necessary to deal with the multiplicity of meanings, to avoid the passivity of the analysis with respect to the authority of the role and in order to find an exit from the labyrinth of interpretations as it is argued further by Derrida:

Will the multiplicity of these tympanums permit themselves to be analyzed? Will we be led back, at the exit of the labyrinths....

It may be about this multiplicity that philosophy, being situated, inscribed, and included within it, has never been able to reason. Doubtless, philosophy will have sought the reassuring and absolute rule, the norm of this polysemia. It will have asked itself if a tympanum is natural or constructed, if one does not always come back to the unity of a

stretched, bordered, framed cloth that watches over its margins as virgin, homogenous, and negative space, leaving its outside outside, without mark, without opposition, without determination....(xxvii)

Derrida further argues, in reference to the question of the margin:

Gnawing away at the border which would make this question into a particular case, they are to blur the line which separates a text from its controlled margin. They interrogate philosophy beyond its meaning, treating it not only as a discourse but as a determined text inscribed in a general text, enclosed in the representation of its own margin. Which compels us not only to reckon with the entire logic of the margin, but also to take an entirely other reckoning: which is doubtless to recall that beyond the philosophical text there is not a blank, virgin, empty margin, but another text, a weave of differences of forces without any present center of reference...; and also to recall that the *written* text of philosophy (this time in its books) overflows and cracks its meaning. (xxiii)

To deal with the problem of different levels of discourse in the project under study, the artist as researcher used the Ecker - Kaelin's Taxonomy, described in The Limits of Aesthetic Inquiry: A Guide to Educational Research. The taxonomic model proposed is a model for relating responses to an artifact or an event and it seemed to the artist as researcher proper to be used in his study. The model encompasses 5 levels of inquiry and related activity. Those are the following:

Experiences with objects/events; art objects/events are perceived, performed, produced.

Criticism; aesthetic judgments are made and justified.

Aesthetic judgments are analysed and evaluated.

Theory; art and art criticism is explained.

Meta-theory; explanations are analysed and evaluated.

These procedures could be followed at two or more of five levels, from the bottom to the top or vice versa.

In this study the artist as researcher proceeded from "Plexus Black Box," the event, to the top of the ladder. "Plexus Black Box" became the subject-matter on which the researcher grounded different, various and very often divergent inside accounts by Plexus participants. He looked at these experiences as starting points of his aesthetic inquiry identifying which invariant features were present in the various recollections of the experiences of the Plexus participants, as Ecker and Kaelin point out:

...,it seems clear that the basic limit-found as that condition allowing communication between the various worlds of aesthetic experience-is to be located within the responses of these various subjects to a single aesthetic object. From this starting point we move to the second phase of our project, which is to show how, once a unique "object of criticism" has

been isolated for aesthetic contemplation, the use of language to describe or evaluate the art work affects what can be known through aesthetic inquiry. (266)

At the end of the study a multicultural understanding is presented by the researcher who presents his inquiry with an open end, not as a conclusion, because, he argues, it is about a still ongoing project, but as a critical contribution to a multicultural esthetic understanding. In chapter VI, the researcher grounded his multicultural interpretation upon a kind of emic- etic re-casting hermeneutic process, made from his close reading of all "insiders" understandings of "Plexus Black Box."

### Glossary

In order to study the multilevel complexity of events, the researcher identified most frequent referential names used by Plexus participants. His identification, verified with other Plexus participants, is offered as an outlined Plexus glossary.

"L.I.A.C.A." is the name of the Italian League of Alternative Cultural Associations that operated in Italy in the middle of '70s. It organized in Rome the first art slave market show in 1978.

"The artist in the first person" is the name for the artist as a cultural independent producer. It was made as the name for an Italian cultural program presented by Sandro Dernini and Luigi Ballerini, at New York University, in 1980.

"In Order to Survive" is the name of the jazz statement by William Parker performed as a street open call event, in front of the Shuttle Theatre, in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, in 1984.

"The Shuttle Theatre" is the name of a multiform community space in the Lower East Side, opened by Giuseppe Sacchi, Sandro Dernini, Brian Goodfellow, and Karl Berger, in 1984. There Plexus found hospitality after the closing of its performance space, in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan, in the beginning of 1984.

"CUANDO" is the name of a community cultural center in the Lower East Side neighborhood of Manhattan. "CUANDO" stands for "Culturas Unidas Aspiraran Nuestro Destino Original"

"Purgatorio Shows" is the name of large multimedia events dedicated to Ralston Farina, in which hundreds of artists are performing at the same time, within an "atelier des arts" environment,

which allows to perform all kinds of possible art forms and languages. They were held in New York, at CUANDO, in 1985 and in 1986.

“Time Art” is the name of a concept, created by Ralston Farina, who related art and time to gravity. “Time Art” is used by Plexus to escape from gravity and to fly over the gravitational weight of Western rationality.

“Art-Opera” or “Artopera” is the name by Butch Morris and Sandro Dernini for a multi arts format based upon an improvised interaction of many art forms, made by a conducted improvisation. It is created through a modular construction process which follows a libretto made by one or more authors. It was performed at the Community Cultural Center CUANDO, in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, in 1985 and 1986, and in Rome at the Metateatro, in 1989.

“Art-Coopera” or “Artcoopera” is the name by Leonard Horowitz for a multi arts event made through “Plexus compressionist art process.” It is built on a modular construction process of individual art contributions, of any kind, converging into a collective antilibretto, mutually made by “insider” collective understandings, imaginations and emotions. It was performed in the megalith sanctuary of Sa Itria in Sardinia, in 1987, and in Rome at the Ridotto del Colosseo Theatre, in 1990.

“Modular construction” is the name of a facilitatory theatre process by Willem Brugman, to allow individual energies to work together. It was experimented in Plexus for the first time in the art-opera Eve, Escape for Donna Purgatorius from Anno Domini by the Multi Chain Gang of Downtown, N.Y., at CUANDO, in 1986.

“Art Slave Ship” is the name of a metaphorical art slave installation made in occasion of Eve, Escape for Donna Purgatorius from Anno Domini by the Multi Chain Gang of Downtown, N.Y., at CUANDO, in 1986. It is performed as an ongoing travelling art installation.

“The Nuraghic Mutant” is the name of a statuette of a copy of an ancient Nuraghic warrior with four arms, four eyes, and two antennas, that is defending the freedom of the continuation of the art slave ship journey since its escaping from the Artworld control, made in New York, at Eve artopera, held at CUANDO, in 1986.

“Nuraghic” is the name of the pre-Roman culture of Sardinian people.

"Plexus compressionist art process" is the name of the Plexus art process by Leonard Horowitz creating an interactive compression and expansion of time and space. It is experimented in artoperas, artcooperas, Purgatorios Shows., and it is used in all Plexus photo group shots.

"Rivington School" is the name of a metal sculpture workshop conducted by Ray Kelly and other artists since early '80s in the Lower East Side neighborhood of Manhattan, from where it was launched the Plexus International Open Call Against Art Slavery in 1988.

"Eating Art" is the name of a concept by Sandro Dernini, built upon the idea to relate biologically the experience of art to the food consumption.

"Made in the '80s for the '90s" is the name of label of events consciously made in the '80s to be "consumed" by the critic consumer of the material culture of the '90s.

"Art Logic" is the name of the strategic eating art map by Sandro Dernini published in Passport for Plexus Passport. Its is related to what in anthropology is known as life logic.

"Elisabeth" is the name of a 200 tons fishing boat of Carlo Dernini, berthed in the port of Carloforte, in Sardinia.

"The Voyage of the Elisabeth" is the name of a project proposal by David Ecker, in order to survive the masters of the living traditions in art, it was made in New York in 1990.

"The Buddha" is the name of a statuette representing a Tibetan Buddha that Don Cherry gave at the Shuttle Theatre, in New York, in 1984. Actually it is on board the Elisabeth, in Sardinia, since 1985.

"The American Indian Chief" is the name of a statuette representing a native American warrior that refers to three different statuette.

The first one of a yellow color was given by Mikey Pinero in 1984 in New York, at the Shuttle Theatre . This statuette was the house's spiritual protector of the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, a famous cultural place, in the neighborhood of the Lower East Side, closed at that time in middle '80s. Mikey Pinero, one of the founders, gave the statuette to the present researcher, at that time one of the organizers of the Shuttle Theatre. It was placed at the entrance of the Shuttle Theatre and became the house's protector of the Shuttle and of Plexus. It was lost in the fire accident of the Shuttle Theatre in 1985.

The second one is a red color copy of the first one that the artist as researcher found in a local shop in the Lower East Side, in 1988. It is placed since 1989 at the entrance of the new Nuyorican Poets Cafe in the Lower East Side.

The third one is a red color copy of the first one with a little color difference from the second one that the artist as researcher found in an other local shop in 1992. Jose Rodriguez, one of the N.Y. coordinators of Plexus International, has it.

"La Barchetta dell'Arte" ( The Little Art Boat) is the name of a little toy boat that refers to two different toys.

The first "La Barchetta della Liberta' dell'Arte" (The Little Toy Art Boat of Art Freedom) was a little toy boat that was transformed in a work of art by Gaetano Brundu in Cagliari, Sardinia, in 1988, and left in Dakar after its arrival at the House of the Slaves in Goree Island in 1989.

The second one, "Colombina" is the copy of the first one. It was found by the artist as researcher in 1991, in a shop in the port of Carloforte, in front to the Elisabeth boat. It was transformed by Silvio Betti in a work of art. He has placed the name of Elisabeth and of the ISALTA (International Society for the Advancement of Living Traditions in Art) on its board. He placed under the bottom a copy of George Chaikin's optical device drawing. On the sail of the little toy boat, he place the logo of the Project Against Apartheid. This second boat is hold by Dr. John Rocchio, a pediatrician at the St. Vincent Hospital in New York. Since 1991 it refers to Columbina Reconciliation Project, one of the Plexus fleet of project proposals presented to the Italian Well Being Scientific Committee in 1991 and actually carried forward by Plexus International and the Consortium for the Well Being in the XXI Century. Colombina is also the name of a little cat.

"Plexonian Art Money" is the name of several art works by Micaela Serino representing Italian legal money bills transformed artistically in Plexus money, made in Rome, in 1988, in support of the opening in Goree island of the World Art Bank.

"Haddamard Matrix" is the name of the mathematical configuration followed by George Chaikin in making the drawing of his optical device.

Ralston Farina in 1984 pointed out the Haddamard Matrix as a tool to escape from time and gravity.



"Ningki-Nangka" is the name of an African invisible mythological serpent, as well as the name of an art coopera project by Assane M'Baye in which the invisible serpent is presented with an apple on its head, and two wings flying above the World Trader Center Towers of New York.

"Plexus Black Box" is the name of an object and a concept which was described by Mitch Ross as follows: "None knows what it is and what they are doing with it. But it allows all Plexus people to feel part of that culture and to make their own definition of it, which is fine because more information goes into and more information has to be defined.

## CHAPTER II

### RELATED LITERATURE

#### Aesthetics

Aesthetics, as philosophy of art, is a fairly recent Western philosophical discipline concerned with theoretical speculations on "art." Originally, in the middle of the eighteenth century, it was formulated by Alexander Baumgarten as a philosophical discipline concerned with the whole region of human sensuous perception. In its original formulation, it was not referred to "art" but to the domain of human knowledge of perception and sensation which, in the context of the age of rationalism, was part of "science". The need for an aesthetics in the eighteenth century was stimulated by the rational development of science which imposed its models of investigation on other realms of human activity. The historical development of traditional modern aesthetics as a philosophy of art is the continuous tendency to frame "art" in a series of theories and definitions, reducing the role of "art" to a theoretical formalization.

"Each age, each art-movement, each philosophy of art, tries over and over again to establish the stated ideal only to be succeeded by a new or revised theory, rooted at least in part, in the repudiation of preceding ones" (143-144),

Morris Weitz argues in The Role of Theory in Aesthetics against the possibility of laying down all necessary and sufficient conditions to define "art" by categories or "isms" and he opens the

closed question of what is "art" as definition". The problem that Weitz raises is not "what is art" but "what sort of concept is art":

"Art," itself, is an open concept. New conditions (cases) have constantly arisen and will undoubtedly constantly arise; new art forms, new movements will emerge, which will demand decisions on the part of those interested, usually professional critics, as to whether the concept should be extended or not....

With "art" its conditions of application can never be exhaustively enumerated since new cases can always be envisaged or created by artists, or even nature, which would call for a decision on someone's part to extend or to close the old or to invent a new concept. (For example, "It's not a sculpture, it's a mobile.") (149)

Weitz gives to the concept of art the value of an open game, as it was stated by Wittgenstein, and defines "the concept of art" by a criterion of evaluation and of recognition with the intention of giving some recommendations for a criteria of excellence.

In Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein raises as an illustrative question "what is a game?" The traditional philosophical and theoretical answer would be in terms of some exhaustive set of properties common to all games. What Weitz points out in Wittgenstein's Investigations is that there are no necessary and sufficient properties common to all games, but only "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and overcrossing such that we can say of games that they form a family with family resemblances and no common traits. For Weitz, the basic resemblance between the open concept of "game" and "art" is in their open texture, where conditions of application are amendable and corrigible. What is not so important is the formula-definition but what lies behind it. "Art", Weitz claims, as the logic of the concept shows, for its open nature, has no set of necessary and sufficient properties:

Aesthetics theory is a logically vain attempt to define what cannot be defined, to state the necessary and sufficient properties of that which has no necessary and sufficient properties, to conceive the concept of art as closed when its very use reveals and demands its openness. (147)

The criteria of recognition of works of art is made by "strands of similarity, conditions and bundles of properties." None of the criteria of recognition, for Weitz, is a defining one, either necessary or sufficient. As Weitz points out the definitions of the necessary and sufficient properties of art are honorific definitions pure and simple, in which "art" has been redefined in terms of chosen criteria. "If we take the aesthetics theories literally, as we have seen, they all fail" Weitz states (153) and he points out the central role of aesthetics in the understanding of art in teaching what and how to look:

To understand the role of esthetic theory is not to conceive it as definition, logically doomed to failure, but to read it as summaries of seriously made recommendations to attend in certain ways to certain features of art. (519)

Weitz argues that the role of theory in aesthetics is to summarise "recommendations" to attend in certain ways to certain features of "art", where there is a convergence between "art" and "philosophy", which in turn converges with "science".

In The Ideology of the Aesthetics, Terry Eagleton argues that aesthetics is concerned with a range of wider social, political and ethical questions which are central current issues in the contemporary dominant Western thought and in particular of European culture, within, he claims, a historical time in which "cultural practice might be claimed to have lost much of its traditional social relevance, debased as it is to a branch of general commodity production (2)."

Aesthetics is a discourse of the body, Eagleton claims, and instead, since its mid-eighteenth original formulation, aesthetics has played the role to reinforce the distinction "between the material and the immaterial: between things and thoughts, sensations and ideas."

The aesthetic concerns this most gross and palpable dimension of the human, which post-Cartesian philosophy, in some curious lapse of attention, has somehow managed to overlook. It is thus the first stirring of a primitive materialism - of the body's long inarticulate rebellion against the tyranny of the theoretical. (13)

John Dewey, in Art As Experience, argues against the isolation of art and its appreciation, caused by theories, raised from "specifiable extraneous conditions", which disconnect art from other modes of ordinary experience of life. These extraneous theories, he argues, are also responsible for intellectualizing the dualistic distinction between sensuous and "borrowed" mediated quality, which, aesthetically, cannot be immediately experienced:

While some theorists make a distinction between sensuous and borrowed value because of the metaphysical dualism just mentioned, others make it from fear lest the work of art be unduly intellectualized. They are concerned to emphasize something which is in fact an esthetic necessity: the immediacy of esthetic experience. It cannot be asserted too strongly that what is not immediate is not esthetic. The mistake lies in supposing that only certain *special* things-those attached just to eye, ear, etc. -can be qualitatively and immediately experienced. (119)

Dewey further argues against the separation between body and mind, made by the dualistic distinction between material and immaterial, which by treating mind as an independent entity from its body and environment, takes art out of the province of the live creature.

Mind that bears only an accidental relation to the environment occupies a similar relation to the body. In making mind purely immaterial (isolated from the organ of doing and undergoing), the body ceases to be living and becomes a dead lump. This conception of mind as an isolated being underlies the conception that esthetic experience is merely something "in mind," and strengthens the conception which isolates the esthetic from those modes of experience in which the body is actively engaged with the things of nature and life. (264)

Dewey, by pointing out the imaginative value of the aesthetic experience as a conscious perception extended by meanings and values only imaginatively present, further states:

Esthetic experience is imaginative. This fact, in connection with a false idea of the nature of imagination, has obscured the larger fact that all *conscious* experience has of necessity some degree of imaginative quality. For while the roots of every experience are found in the interaction of a live creature with its environment, that experience becomes conscious, a matter of perception, only when meanings enter it that are derived from prior experiences. Imagination is the only gateway through which these meanings can find their way into a present interaction; or rather, as we have just seen, the conscious adjustment of the new and the old *is* imagination. (272)

Aesthetics, as a philosophical mode of inquiry applied to the experience of art, is pointed out by Eugene Kaelin, in An Existentialist Aesthetic:

The job of philosophy, then, is to refine meanings, not by empty logic-chopping, but by continual referral of ideas to the conditions of everyday experience. And when the critical reflective method of philosophy is applied to the area of our experiences of art it is called "aesthetics" (322).

Kaelin defines "aesthetics" as a "philosophical interpretation of the significance of human experience", as he wrote in his Art and Existence, for an understanding of this significance in which consciousness and objects are correlates. He points out, following the phenomenological direction, how the interaction with the objects bring to reflect as an act of consciousness "to return to the things themselves".

Benedetto Croce claims in The Essence of Aesthetics that the nature of "art" that have arisen down in the course of history, at a determined moment, yet it is limited by the history of that moment, and cannot pretend to have a value of totality, or what is called a definitive solution. He defends the a-logical character of art against any utilitarianism. Croce presents art as a form of intuition and he denies that theories that attempt to explain "art" as "philosophy" as well as "religion" or "science" have the rights to occupy the greater part of the history of aesthetics. In Aesthetic As Science of Expression and General Linguistic, he claims that to conceive aesthetics as a science of art separates "art" from its general spiritual life, and it is making art as a " sort of special

function or aristocratic club," which does not allow to reveal the true nature of art and its roots in human nature. Croce affirms the indivisibility of the work of art as a whole, and arguing against the customary traditional approach of aesthetic inquiry to divide a work of art in parts for the sake of the theoretical inquiry, he claims in Aesthetic, as it follows:

The fact that we divide a work of art into parts, a poem into scenes, episodes, similes, sentences, or a picture into scenes, episodes, similes, sentences, or a picture into single figures and objects, background, foreground, etc., may seem opposed to this affirmation. But such division annihilates the work, as dividing the organism into heart, brain, nerves, muscles and so on, turns the living being into a corpse. (47)

Croce argues against the tradition to present science as well art as part of a single linear human development which pretends to show the whole history of knowledge as one single line of progress and regress. Croce conceives art as intuition, and intuition, for Croce, is individuality which does not repeat itself. For this reason it should be erroneous to represent the history of art as developed following a single line. Croce further states:

Consequently, any attempt at an aesthetic classification of the arts is absurd. If they be without limits, they are not exactly determinable, and consequently cannot be philosophically classified. All the books dealing with classifications and systems of the arts could be burned without any loss whatever. (49)

### Hermeneutics and Deconstruction

Hans-Georg Gadamer, in The Relevance of the Beautiful, pointing out the philosophical task of "learning to see things together in respect of the one," poses the problem of the gap between contemporary artists and traditional Western art, by further arguing that also the word "art" is a Western cultural context-bound word:

The problem that we have posed is that of bridging the enormous gap between the traditional form and content of Western art and the ideals of contemporary artists. The word *art* itself gives us a first orientation. We should never underestimate what a word can tell us, for language represents the previous accomplishment of thought. Thus we should take the word *art* as our point of departure. Anyone with the slightest historical knowledge is aware that this word has had the exclusive and characteristic meaning that we ascribe to it today for less than two hundred years. (12)

For Gadamer, each theory of art and each interpretation of an art work take place within its own historical world related to a particular time and space. Each interpreter has his/her own angle of interpretative participation depending upon his/her personality, education, and culture, Gadamer argues in The Hermeneutics of Suspicion.

That is, without any doubt, the excellence of the humanities, that we share a common world of tradition and interpreted human experience. The interpretation of the common world in which we participate is certainly not in the first place the objectifying task of methodical thinking. That may certainly be included, but it is not the *raison d'être* of our activity. When we are interpreting a text, it is not to prove "scientifically" that *this* love poem belongs to the genre of love poems. That is an objective statement and nobody can doubt it, but if that conclusion is the only result of investigating a poem, then we have failed. The intention is to understand *this* love poem, on its own and in its unique relation to the common structure of love poems. It is an absolutely individualized particular form, so that one participates in the utterance or message which is there embodied by the poet. (64).

Gadamer introducing hermeneutics, in Reason in the Age of Science, points out:

Not only the word *hermeneutics* is ancient. The reality designated by the word is a well, whether it be rendered today with such expression as interpretation, explication, translation, or even only with understanding. At any rate, it precedes the idea of methodical science developed by modernity. (113)

The history of interpretation is a history of application and it is rather a function of spiritual conservation and tradition, and carries into every present its hidden history. The changing substance of a text is determined by the widespread cultural effects and manifestations it has passed through, and that this wider significance is commonly understood and accepted within any present culture. The idea of tradition is essential to Gadamer as it is pointed out in Reason in the Age of Science:

To the extent that hermeneutics brings the contribution of the sciences into this context of mutual agreement that links us with the tradition that has come down to us in a unity that is efficacious in our lives, it is not just a repertory of methods.... (137)

The historical perspective, in the procedure of understanding, accounts prior the perspective and idiom of the interpreter. For Gadamer, interpretation does not require the neutralization of one's personal historical horizon.

No method can transcend the interpreter's own historicity. Even if we can achieve distance, Gadamer argues that "we actually interpret an interpretation". In The Relevance of the Beautiful, he argues:

In its original meaning, interpretation implies pointing in a particular direction. It is important to note that all interpretation points in a direction rather than to some final endpoint, in the sense that it points toward an open realm that can be filled in a variety of ways. We can distinguish two different senses of interpretation: pointing to something and pointing out the meaning of something. Clearly both of these are connected with one another. "Pointing to something" is a kind of "indicating" that functions as a sign. "Pointing out what something means," on the other hand, always relates back to the kind of sign that interprets itself. Thus when we interpret the meaning of something, we actually interpret an interpretation (68).

Gadamer in Reason in the Age of Science further clarifies this idea of interrelation between interpreter and what is to be interpreted. He argues that between the two there is "a sustaining agreement" which links one to the other.

Social life consists of a constant process of transformation of what previously has been held valid. But it would surely be an illusion to want to deduce normative notions *in abstract* to and to posit them as valid with the claim of scientific rectitude. The point here is a notion of science that does not allow for the ideal of the nonparticipating observer but endeavors instead to bring to our reflective awareness the communality that binds everyone together. In my own works I have applied this point to the hermeneutic sciences and stressed the way the being of the interpreter pertains intrinsically to the being of what is to be interpreted. Whoever wants to understand something already brings along something that anticipatorily joins him with what he wants to understand - a sustaining agreement. (135-136)

In the hermeneutical circle, we cannot understand a part as such until we have a perception of the whole, because a genuine dialectic always occurs between our idea of the whole and our perception of the components that make it. Once the dialectic has begun, neither side is totally determined by the other.

In Reason in the Age of Science, claiming that, because "interpretation is always on the way" and "the very idea of a definitive interpretation seems to be intrinsically contradictory," Gadamer argues against the claim of the legitimacy of definitive scientific "objective" knowledge:

If one wishes to appraise the significance or the task and the limits of what we call hermeneutics today, one must bear in mind this philosophical and humane background, this fundamental doubt about the legitimacy of objective self-consciousness. In a certain way, the very word *hermeneutics* and its cognate word *interpretation* furnish a hint, for these words imply a sharp distinction between the claim of being able to explain a fact completely through deriving all its conditions; through calculating it from the givens of all its conditions; and through calculating it from the givens of all its conditions; and through learning to produce it by artificial arrangement - the well-known ideal of natural scientific knowledge; and on the other hand, the claim (say, of interpretation), which we always presume to be no more than an approximation: only an attempt, plausible and fruitful, but clearly never definitive. (105)

Gadamer in Reason in the Age of Science underlines the shifting of legitimacy in science today of the criterion of measurability applied in the old "objective" scientific paradigms:

Perhaps even more significantly, the notion of objectivity so closely coupled in physics with that of measurability has undergone profound changes within more recently theoretical physics. (14)

Gadamer attacks the neutrality of scientific procedures and in particular he denies the "objectivity" of hermeneutics:

Now interpretation refers not only to the explication of the actual intention of a difficult text. Interpretation becomes an expression for getting behind the surface phenomena and data. The so-called critique of ideology called scientific neutrality into doubt. It questioned not merely the validity of the phenomena of consciousness and of self-consciousness (Which was the case with psychoanalysis) but also the purely theoretical validity of scientific objectivity to which the sciences laid claim. (100)

He further argues:

Once we presuppose that there is no such thing as a fully transparent text or a completely exhaustive interest in the explaining and construing of texts, then all perspectives relative to the art and theory of interpretation are shifted. Then it becomes more important to trace the interests guiding us with respect to a given subject matter than simply to interpret the evident content of a statement. One of the more fertile insights of modern hermeneutics is that every statement has to be seen as a response to a question and that the only way to understand a statement is to get hold of the question to which the statement is an answer. This prior question has its own direction of meanings and is by no means to be gotten hold of through a network of background motivations but rather in reaching out to the broader contexts of meaning encompassed by the question and deposited in the statement. (105-106)

The interpretation of a work of art, as not just as an object standing, passively, front us, was by Martin Heidegger examined in The Origin of the Work of Art.

The world is never an object that stands before us and can be seen. World is the ever-nonobjective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse keep us transported into Being. (170)

Heidegger point out that it is art that makes artist and work possible. The work is the origin of the artist, and the artist is defined by his work which is the source of the artist:

The artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither is without the other. Nevertheless, neither is the sole support of the other. In themselves and in their interrelations artist and work are each of them by virtue of a third thing which is prior to both, namely, that which also gives artist and work of art their names, art. (143)

The question of the origin of the artwork is presented as a question concerned the essence of art. The conception of truth in art is evaluated by Heidegger not on the basis of its correspondence to whatever is being represented, but it is envisioned to something that rises from the work of art. The truth of a work of art is that it discloses the being of the work and it is part of the nature of art to disclose the ontological world in which it was created. For Heidegger, the work as work sets up a world, and the work opens the open region of the world. The horizon or context of the world places "the setting-into-work of truth" in which the work of art functions. The appreciation experience of a work of art lets happen the truth openness in the work of art. The appreciators as preservers of the work of art are essentials as well as the creators, and art originates creator and preserver. Heidegger claims that "the world worlds", it means that the world is not static and the



same dynamic character is true of the work of art. The existing world however, at the moment of interpretation, is important as the work of art and must be interpreted within the existing context. With his "art lets truth originate", in the conclusion of his essay, Heidegger claims that "to originate" is what the word origin means, and because the question of the origin of the work of art is the origin of the historical existence of the creator and of the preserver, Heidegger, with a circular move, opens this question to the origin of the human historical existence and to the question of what is time. Heidegger examines, in The Concept of Time, the question of what is time as a way of *being-in-the-world* by being temporal with respect to its Being:

Being futural as we have characterized it is, as the authentic 'how' of being temporal, that way of Being of Dasein in which and out of which it gives itself its time. Maintaining myself alongside my past in running ahead I have time... (14E).

In Being and Time, with "To the things themselves" he expresses his conception of phenomenology as a mode of grasping objects *in such a way* in which they show themselves from themselves:

'Phenomenology' neither designates the object of its researches, nor characterizes the subject-matter thus comprised. The word merely informs us of the "*how*" with which *what* is to be treated in this science gets exhibited and handled. To have a science 'of' phenomena means to grasp its objects *in such a way* that everything about them which is up for discussion must be treated by exhibiting it directly and demonstrating it directly (59).

To grasp *in such a way* an event which is taking place in its own time span and which is already becoming a future event, he brings time and space together. In these circumstances we are forced to re-think what time is. Heidegger points out in his The Concept of Time, "Time too is nothing. It persists merely as a consequence of the events taking place in it." (3E). Heidegger argues that time is that "now" within which events take place:

What is the now? Is the now at my disposal? Am I the now? Is every other person the now? Then time would indeed be I myself, and every other person would be time. And in our being with one another we would be time - everyone and no one (5E).

Heidegger's temporal analysis of human existence has shown that understanding is not just one of the various possible behaviours of the subject, but the mode of the Being of being-there, within its finiteness and historicity, and Hermeneutics hence denotes the whole of its experience of the world in which the work of art constantly renews the mode of being experienced.

Alfred Schutz, in Reflections on the Problem of Relevance, claims that such a dialectic process of understanding, as "a specific *attention à la vie*", is sedimented in previously experiences, interconnected into an "experiential framework" or context and from which depends the horizon of the understanding.

It seems a precondition of any thematization that the experience constituting this theme has its own history of which it is the sedimentation. Any one of these experiences inherently refers to previous experiences from which it is derived and to which it refers. I am, thus, at any time in a position to question any of these as to its genesis or historical origin. In other words, each theme refers to elements which formerly have been within the field of our consciousness...(14)

Understanding, for Schutz depends from the "actual interest" of the subject, as a form of relevance, which in turn depends from the situation in which the problem is raised and from the system of problems to which that specific problem belongs.

It is the set of "actual interests," which itself depends upon the autobiographical and situational circumstances of the individual that limit what is commonly called the level of investigation ( that is, the borderline up to which a segment of the world has to be put into question)...(35)

The problem of the interpretative relevances in the process of understanding cannot be taken as isolated but is interrelated with others, forming a complex system, within systems of problems, Schutz, in The Phenomenology of the Social World, argues and claims that between the interpreter and his reflective vision there is a social world which plays with decisions concerning which alternatives follow as relevant in the interpretative act. Each of us, for Schutz, has a "stock of knowledge at hand" which characterizes the multiple layers of meaning of our own social world, "our own system of reference", which performs colors interpretation.

The interpretatively relevant moment of both - the experience to be interpreted and the scheme of interpretation (i.e. the applicable previous experiences as found in our stock of knowledge at hand) - are integrated into systems, and systems, at least as to their type, as well as the typical ways in which they are applied, are within the stock of what we have already experienced. Such already acquired history has its genetic and autobiographically determined history and is itself the sediment of habitually acquired practice. (43)

Schutz claims that our knowledge is derived and distributed socially and a small part of it and of our stock of knowledge at hand has originated from our own personal experience, but the greater part of it is socially communicated to us. Schutz argues that there is not such a thing as an isolated experience without a context, a social world, a system of reference.

Any experience is experience within a context. Any present experience receives its meaning from the sum total of past experiences which led to the present one and is also connected by more or less empty anticipations to future experiences, the occurrence of which may or may not fulfil these expectations. (88)

Postmodern pluralistic interpretations of "art" and "text" and "ethnoreality" have undermined the Western modern belief that there is a singular truth as well as a singular ground for art, moving contemporary artists to redefine their role and the significance of art, as it was pointed out in the brochure of the symposium on "The Dematerialization of Art", organized in New York, in 1987, by the International Center for Advanced Studies in Art at New York University which was inspired by the underlying theme of an art show "Les Immaterieux" held by Jean-Francois Lyotard in Paris:

Postmodern thought points to a total redefinition of the role of the artist and the significance of art. Scientific breakthroughs have presented not just a new version of reality but also of time and space. The body, mind and senses are no longer the only means by which we experience the world. What significance this will have for art cannot yet be said but we are clearly on the brink of the most extraordinary leap in human perception.

Lyotard in The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, claims in act, as also it was pointed out by Thomas Kuhn, in the contemporary culture and society, a process of "delegitimation" of the Western knowledge, which he argues has lost its "objective" and scientific credibility. This "crisis" has caused an erosion of the separation among scientific disciplines and, through the loss of the control by the dominant power of the territory of the knowledge, new realms and scientific breakthroughs are originate, as Lyotard points out:

The classical dividing lines between the various fields of science are thus called into question - disciplines disappear, overlappings occur at the border between sciences, and from these new territories are born. The speculative hierarchy of learning gives way to an immanent and, as it were, "flat" network of areas of inquiry, the respective frontiers of which are in constant flux. The old "faculties" splinter into institutes and foundations of all kinds, and the universities lose their function of speculative legitimization. (39)

Lyotard further argues that this delegitimation has opened the road to the emergence of new frontiers and of new languages, leading to the current postmodern theory attacking to the legitimacy of the Western dominant thought. He argues that postmodernism has opened new territory to art and to the artists by questioning modern art theory.

The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, put forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable. A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a

philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been done*. (81)

Postmodern thought and deconstruction theory have challenged Modernist tradition. The "deconstruction" of art allows a new pluralism in aesthetics and expands the artist's cultural domain. In Margins of Philosophy, Jacques Derrida argues:

But by relating it to something to which it has no relation, is one not immediately permitting oneself to be encoded by philosophical logos, to stand under its banner? certainly, except by writing this relationship following the mode of a nonrelationship about which it would be demonstrated simultaneously or obliquely-on the philosophical surface of the discourse-that no philosopheme will ever have been prepared to conform to it or translate it. (xiv)

Derrida argues that there is a "reappropriation" shift in the theory of interpretation which attacks the existing limits and distinctions by bringing inside what was outside and viceversa.

How to interpret-but here interpretation can no longer be a theory or discursive practice of philosophy-the strange and unique property of a discourse that organizes the *economy* of its representation, the law of its proper weave, such that its *outside* is never its outside, never surprises it, such that the logic of its heteronomy still reasons from within the vault of its autism? For this is how *Being* is understood: its proper. It assures without let-up the *relevant* movement of reappropriation. Can one then *pass* this singular limit which is not a limit, which no more separates the inside from the outside than it assures their permeable and transparent continuity? (xvi)

He further continues arguing and questioning the resistance of the philosophical discourse to deconstruction, in reference of two kinds of appropriating mastery, hierarchy and envelopment:

It is the infinite mastery that the agency of Being (and of the) proper seems to assure it; this mastery permits it to interiorize every limit as *being* and as being its own *proper*. To exceed it, by the same token, and therefore to preserve it in itself. Now, in its mastery and its discourse on mastery (for mastery is a signification that we still owe to it), philosophical power always seems to combine *two types*.

On the one hand, a *hierarchy*: the particular sciences and regional ontologies are subordinated to general ontology, and then to fundamental ontology. From this point of view all the questions that solicit Being and the proper upset the order that submits the determined field of science, its formal objects or materials (logic and mathematics, or semantics, linguistic, rhetoric, science of literature, political economy, psychoanalysis, etc.), to philosophical jurisdiction. In principle, then, these questions are prior to the constitution of a rigorous, systematic, and orderly theoretical discourse in these domains (which therefore are no longer simply domains, regions circumscribed, delimited, and assigned from outside and above).

On the other hand, an *envelopment*: the whole is implied, in the speculative mode of reflection and expression, in each part. Homogenous, concentric, and circulating indefinitely, the movement of the whole is remarked in the partial determinations of the system or encyclopedia, without the status of that remark, and the partitioning of the part, giving rise to any general deformation of the space. (xix-xx)

Derrida's challenge the "logocentric" tendency of Western thought to refer "all questions of the meaning of representations" to a singular founding source which allows, within an hierarchical view, to identify a presence of an "author" behind them, as well as to imagine an artist fully in possess of his own art, it was argued by Victor Burgin in The End of Art Theory. Criticism and Postmodernity:

When we consider what Derrida calls "logocentrism - the belief that all questions of meaning are to be referred to a privileged origin - together "humanism" - the view of man as in full and spontaneous possession of himself and of his own expression - we can see one of the reasons why painting continues to be so very highly valued, not only in conservative aesthetics....(33)

He further clarifies his claims about the highly value of art by pointing out how in particular painting embodies "exchange" and "individuality," two essential concepts of the Western society.

First, the new easel painting had the advantage over the previous mural painting of being mobile, for the first time it became an object of *exchange*, a commodity amongst other commodities in a market economy. Secondly, the value of a painting in this market, in these early days of humanism, became increasingly linked to the notion of individuality: the individuality of the consumer,...Even more, however, the value of a painting was linked to the individuality of the producer, to the idea of authorship. Paintings were no longer produced entirely by anonymous craftsmen, they were the work of "creative individuals." (35)

### Artworld and Contemporary Changes

The individual identity of the artist and the commodity identity of the work of art are critical concepts in the contemporary art world debate. In order to debate art theories, art critics and philosophers of art usually refer to a "artworld", a kind of social world, with its "stock of knowledge at hand" made by the history of art and by art theories.

Danto in his essay The Artworld defines what "artworld" means:

To see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry--an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld (162).

Danto claims in his essay that "the role of artistic theories is to make possible art." (164)

Danto further argues that because the artist is refining out his art "through an atmosphere compounded of artistic theories and the history of recent and remote painting, " it derives that his art "belongs" to a world made by this atmosphere and history. He claims that what makes "art" is its artistic identification within an artworld, within a certain theory of art, which, belonging to the

history of art, in turn creates an artworld. Using as an example the case of the Andy Warhol's Brillo Boxes, Danto argues, because they were made by a person with an "is" of artistic identification belonging to the artworld, it was this identity that made them "art".

Danto further points out that "the Brillo box of the artworld may be just the Brillo box of the real one, separated and united by the *is* of artistic identification. (64) For Danto is the "is" of artistic identification, belonging to the artworld, that after it is mastered by the artist transform a simple work in a work of art, and "We cannot help him until he has mastered the is of artistic identification and so constitutes it a work of art." (162)

A necessary condition for a work to be an artwork, for Danto, is "that some part or property of it be designable by the subject of a sentence that employs this special *is* . The identification of this special "is" of artistic identification is by Danto defined as follows:

There is an *is* that figures prominently in statements concerning artworks which is not the *is* of either identity or predication; nor is it the *is* of existence, of identification, or some special *is* made up to serve a philosophic end....It is the sense of *is* in accordance with which a child, shown a circle and a triangle and asked which is him and which his sister, will point to the triangle saying "That is me"; or, in response to my question, the person next to me points to the man in purple and says "That one is Lear"; or in the gallery I point, for my companion's benefit, to a spot in the painting before us and say "That white dab is Icarus." We do not mean, in these instances, that whatever is pointed to stands for, or represents, what it is said to be, for the word 'Icarus' stands for or represents Icarus: yet I would not in the same sense of *is* point to the word and say "That is Icarus." The sentence "That *a* is *b* " is perfectly compatible with "That *a* is not *b* " when the first employs this sense of *is* and the second employs some other, though *a* and *b* are used nonambiguously throughout. Often, indeed, the truth of the first *requires* the truth of the second. The first, in fact, is incompatible with "That *a* is not *b* " only when the *is* is used nonambiguously throughout. For want of a word I shall designate this the *is of artistic identification*.; in each case in which it is used, the *a* stands for some specific physical property of, or physical part of, an object;.... (159)

Dante points out the discrimination between a Warhol's Brillo box and a Brillo box in the stockroom of a supermarket consists in a certain theory of art that brings the first up in the artworld, and "keeps it from collapsing into the real object which is (in a sense of *is* other than that of artistic identification)." (164)

Of course, without the theory, one is unlikely to see it as art, and in order to see it as part of the artworld, one must have mastered a good deal of artistic theory as well as a considerable amount of history of recent New York painting....It is the role of artistic theories, these days as always, to make the artworld, and art, possible. (164)

Danto argues that in the 20th century the question of what is art? became urgent because the existing art models collapsed and it became more visible the inadequacy of the art theories, period by period, movement by movement. For Danto the historical importance of art was to "make philosophy of art possible and important."

Now if we look at the art of our recent past in these terms, grandiose as they are, what we see is something which depends more and more upon theory for its existence as art, so that theory is not something external to a world it seeks to understand: hence in understanding its object it has to understand itself. (31)

Dickie in his essay Defining Art: II, defines "art" for its institutional nature and he uses the term "the artworld" by Danto to refer to the broad social framework in which have place works of art. For him, the artworld is made by an infinity of systems and subsystems, "a bundle of systems: theater, painting, sculpture, music, literature, and so on;" which operates as institutional framework for the "presenting" of works, and the "conferring" upon them the status of candidates for appreciation as works of art. Dickie defines a work of art as follows:

A work of art in the classificatory sense is (1) an artifact (2) upon which some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld) has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation (125 ).

Within the setting the artworld is giving this status of candidate for appreciation. But who has the status to be a candidate for appreciation?"

Dickie admits that the notion of conferring status within the framework of the artworld is "excessively vague":

Certainly this notion is not as clear-cut as is the conferring of status within the legal system...The counterparts in the artworld to specified procedures and lines of authority are nowhere codified, and the artworld carries on its business at the level of customary practice. Still there *is* a practice and this defines a social institution. a social institution need not have a formally established constitution,...in order to exist and have the capacity to confer status....

Assuming that the existence of the artworld has been established or at least been made plausible, the problem is now to see how status is conferred by this institution. My thesis is that analogous to the way in which a person is certified as qualified for office, or a person acquires that status of wise man within a community, an artifact can acquire the status of candidate for appreciation within the social system which may be called "the artworld." (126)

But how we recognize that the status has been conferred to some candidates? for Dickie it is shown by their appearances in galleries, theatres, museums, etc., recognized institutional places of the artworld. For Dickie, it is a social property of the artworld that confers this status. Dickie, arguing about the treating of an artifact as a candidate for appreciation, raises the case of an action made by a salesman of plumbing supplies compared with Duchamp's entering with a urinal, labelled "Fountain," in an art show, and with the Walter de Maria's naming as art a stainless-steel bar. He argues that what makes a thing a work of "art" is the important difference between "placing before" and "conferring the status of candidate for appreciation" which makes possible that Duchamp's Fountain is not just a misplaced urinal because of its artistic identification, in this case, conferred by the artist Duchamp.

The difference is that Duchamp's action took place within the institutional setting of the artworld and the plumbing salesman's action took place outside of it. The salesman could do what Duchamp did, that is, convert a urinal into a work of art, but such a thing probably would not occur to him....Walter de Maria has in the case of one of his works even gone through the emotions-no doubt as a burlesque-of using a procedure which is used by many legal and some nonlegal institutions-the procedures of licensing. His High Energy Bar (a stainless-steel bar) is accompanied by a certificate which bears the name of the work and states that the bar is a work of art only when the certificate is present. (126)

The institutional context of "art" within the artworld and the philosophical theories of aesthetics have never been of more crucial importance in the understanding and making "art" in the twentieth century.

Theodore Adorno attacks the institutional setting of art as functional to the professional critics who were first of all 'reporters' and oriented people in the market of intellectual products of the bourgeois society. In Prisms, Adorno wrote:

When the critics in their playground--art--no longer understand what they judge and enthusiastically permit themselves to be degraded to propagandists or censors, it is the old dishonesty of trade fulfilling itself in their fate. The prerogatives of information and position permit them to express their opinion as if it were objectivity. But it is solely the objectivity of the ruling mind (20).

The crisis in art and the change of reaction of the masses toward art in the beginning of the XX century might be understandable was pointed out by Walter Benjamin in The Work of Art in the Age of Technical Reproducibility, as a consequence of the decrease in the social significance of the work of art:



The secular cult of beauty, developed during the Renaissance and prevailing for three centuries, clearly showed that ritualistic bias in its decline and the first deep crisis which befell it. With the advent of the first truly revolutionary means of reproduction, photography, simultaneously with the rise of socialism, art sensed the approaching crisis which has become evident a century later. At the time, art reacted with the doctrine of *l'art pour l'art*, that is, with a theology of art. This gave rise to what might be called a negative theology in the form of the idea of "pure" art, which not only denied any social function of art but also any categorizing by subject matter. (224)

This concern of cultural and artistic renewal was historically felt by the avant-garde as attack to the bourgeois institution of art and against aestheticism and its concept of autonomous art, challenging the separation of art from its context and bridging artists and public together as integral components of the work of art.

In the article The Social Significance of Autonomous Art: Adorno and Burger, Lambert Zuidervaart, argues that avant-garde movements rejected both bourgeois life praxis and aestheticism. The avant-garde tried both "to organize a new life praxis from a basis in art" and to eliminate autonomous art as an institution. Zuidervaart, claiming that the self-referentiality of autonomous art might make truth possible in some works and prevent this disclosure in others, argues against the support of Adorno for autonomous art and its self-referential import.

In Adorno's account, autonomy and social character mark the position of the work of art within advanced capitalist societies...The autonomy of art works is conditioned by society as a whole, but their autonomy is itself a precondition for truth in art. The notions of autonomy and truth, in turn, provide the impetus for Adorno's claims about social significance. Although Adorno locates the social significance of the art work in both its import and its social functions, he understands these social functions as primarily cognitive functions, and he regards their significance as directly dependent on the import of the work. Although import consists of both social content and truth content, truth provides the ultimate criterion for the social significance of the work's import...(65-66)

Zuidervaart point out that the final import of the work of autonomous art was "distance from life praxis", a complete detachment of art from life. Against this detachment, he supports the truth and social significance of "heteronomous art:"

By "heteronomous art" I mean art that has not become relatively independent from other institutions of bourgeois society and whose products are produced and received to accomplish purposes that are directly served by other institutions. The term covers both traditional folk art and contemporary popular art. (69)

Heteronomous art has a non referential significance, with its purposes as "functions within other institutions", in fluid contrast with autonomous art, and is able to challenge the existing order. He argues that the avant-garde, by attacking the institution of autonomous art to eliminate it,

and rejecting both bourgeois life praxis and aestheticism, in order to disclose human aspirations, helped to understand the need of a more open scenery where to disclose their "art".

"Avant-gardiste manifestations" undermined the notion of art's intended purpose, negated the categories of individual creation and individual reception, and challenged the distinction between producer and recipient. (67)

To make possible such an attack to the normativity of autonomous art, he introduces a "complex normativity" on which a heteronomous art could operate.

"Complex normativity" means a network of norms, no one of which has preeminence, and some of which apply to phenomena outside the institution of autonomous art. Some of the norms could apply to the functions of works within an institution of art. Other could apply to the functions of works within other institutions. (74)

The individuality of the artist and purity of autonomous art, which characterized the aesthetics of the Modernism, instead of being really free or pure from any particular other interest which was not of art, on the contrary, was by Zuidervaat claimed to serve to consolidate the institutional bourgeois control of art, as he argues in his article, through a process of self-referentiality:

The process and structures that have come to characterize autonomous art are such that the products in this institution tend to be self-referential. This self-referential tendency has become increasingly evident in the twentieth century. For products of autonomous art the primary means of serving this institution's purposes are to affirm and criticize other products of autonomous art. The functions of these products in other institutions tend to be secondary means that are subservient to self-referential functions (67).

In the essay Modernist Painting, Clement Greenberg states the essence of self-criticism of art in which Modernism relied, using the peculiar procedures of an art discipline to criticize, from inside, the discipline itself -not in order to attack it, but to reinforce it more strongly in its art domain.

It quickly emerged that the unique and proper area of competence of each art coincided with all that was unique to the nature of its medium. The task of self-criticism became to eliminate from the effects of each art any and every effect that might conceivably be borrowed from or by the medium of any other art. Thereby each art would be rendered "pure," and in its "purity" find the guarantee of its standards of quality as well as of its independence. "Purity" meant self-definition...(102)

As David Novitz in the article The Integrity of Aesthetics

argues it is false to keep the idea that aesthetic values are independent and pure of particular economic, religious, gender, production interests and that each of them try to advance certain view of art and undermining others:

Different social structures serve different interests, and it is well known that not all interests are served equally. Much the same is true of that cluster of social relations that is called the art world. It too embodies and reflects (in the form of criteria of value) certain artistic and social interests while subverting or undermining others. This is why it is false to maintain that aesthetic values are pure and totally unmediated by economic, moral, intellectual, religious or gender interests. For all of these reason, then, any attempt to explain aesthetic judgements as devoid of, and wholly uninfluenced by, the concerns and interests of everyday life is bound to fail. (19)

During modernism, aesthetics becomes a central component in the constitution of the ruling Western bourgeois ideologies, as the project under study is trying to point out by using Terry Eagleton's claim made in The Ideology of the Aesthetic of the emergence of a form of Western cultural imprisonment or theoretical slavery of "art" from a not well recognized ideology of aesthetics .

The emergence of the aesthetic as a theoretical category is closely bound up with the material process by which cultural production, at an early stage of bourgeois society, becomes 'autonomous' - autonomous, that is, of the various social functions which it has traditionally served. Once artefacts become commodities in the market place, they exist for nothing and nobody in particular, and can consequently be rationalized, ideologically speaking, as existing entirely and gloriously for themselves. It is this notion of autonomy or self-referentiality which the new discourse of aesthetics is centrally concerned to elaborate; ...that art is thereby conveniently sequestered from all other social practices, to become an isolated enclave within which the dominant social order can find an idealized refuge from its own actual values of competitiveness, exploitation and material possessiveness.(9)

Charles J. Lumsden, a sociobiologist, foresees in his essay "Aesthetics" presented in The Sociobiological Imagination, that, for sociobiology, aesthetics would become in the '90s what ethics were in the '80s, namely a new source of ideas to verify matters usually considered as being part exclusively of philosophical discourse.

Thus, until cognitive science abandons the clockwork-in-the-head tack and begin to rejoin, as it were, deduction with passion, a truly profound understanding of aesthetic judgement (and the fights it causes) simply must wait. The wait may not be too long. Novel ideas about microcognition and parallel distributed processing, about thought as lived metaphor, and about the passions as astute guides to judgment are breaking deductive logic's stranglehold on mind theory. Now there is room for a "calculus of felt distinctions" that makes possible a newly resynthesized science of mind in which feeling, understanding, appreciating, and contemplating are all of one piece - as are we. (259)

Within a cognitive perspective, Howard Gardner in Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences, points out art has a spatial-time intelligence value, able to increase the perception:

While one might underestimate the component of spatial thinking in the sciences, the centrality of spatial thinking in the visual arts is self-evident. The enterprise of painting and sculpture involve an exquisite sensitivity to the visual and spatial world as well as an ability to recreate it in fashioning a work of art (195-196).

The cognitive value of art is claimed by Jerome S. Bruner in On Knowing. Essays for the Left Hand. His essay "Art as a Mode of Knowing" points out his claim that "art" is a form of knowing coming from "the creation of a stream of metaphoric activity", different from the mode of knowing of science. He argues:

The elegant rationality of science and the metaphoric non-rationality of art operate with deeply different grammars; perhaps they even represent a profound complementarity. For in the experience of art, we connect by a grammar of metaphor, one that defies the rational methods of the linguist and the psychologist. (74)

He describes this artistic mode of knowing as "the conversion of impulse into the experience of art" made by "simultaneous presence of several streams of fringe association" in which an active knowing function is played by the beholder in fusing and connecting inner experiences, which makes that art is not an universal mode of communication.

The sociobiologist Lumsden argues that art is an autonomous realm, independent from any universal and functionalist theory, and against the "tyranny of function", he further argues that functional speculations to place the aesthetic experience at the disposal of the fittest, "to gain the edge in competing for valuable resources", have missed entirely the basic evolutionary point of our species; "we are as we are, what we are, not because we are genetic creatures but because we are bred of both genomic and cultural activity: biocultural organism (264)."

John Dewey foresees "art", placed in a "directly human context", able to advance the human development, as he argues in Art as Experience:

A conception of fine art that sets out from its connection with discovered qualities of ordinary experience will be able to indicate the factors and forces that favour the normal development of common human activities into matters of artistic value. It will also be able to point out those conditions that arrest its normal growth. (11)

The vital need of a living being to overcome factors of separations between "art" and the process of living for Dewey is bound up with "its interchanges with its environment, not externally but in the most intimate way" for its survival as it was clearly stated:

If the gap between organism and environment is too wide, the creature dies. If its activity is not enhanced by the temporary alienation, it merely subsists. Life grows when a temporary falling out is a transition to a more extensive balance of the energies of the organism with those of the conditions under which it lives. These biological commonplaces are something more than that; they reach to the roots of the esthetic in experience. (14).

In Art as Experience, he clearly points out that a work of art may be considered a "live creature" and "the nature of experience is determined by the essential conditions of life":

The nature of experience is determined by the essential conditions of life. While man is other than bird and beast, he shares basic vital functions with them and has to make the same basal adjustments if he is to continue the process of living. Having the same vital needs, man derives the means by which he breathes, moves, looks and listen, the very brain with which he coordinates his senses and his movements, from his animal forbears. The organs with which he maintains himself in being are not of himself alone, but by the grace of struggles and achievements of a long line of animal ancestry. (13)

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Marcel Duchamp in the essay The Creative Act claims that in the act of the artist of the transmutation of an inert matter into a work of art, the recipient as interpreter is an integral component of the experience of art:

The creative act takes another aspect when the spectator experiences the phenomenon of transmutation; through the change from inert matter into a work of art, an actual transubstantiation has taken place, and the role of the spectator is to determine the weight of the work on the esthetic scale. All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act. (25-26)

In the 60s, the reunification of things and thoughts and the breaking of the distinction of function between thing's makers and thinkers or thought's makers was made up as a contemporary art issue by conceptualist artists as it pointed out by Ursula Meyer in Conceptual Art in describing the shifting from the dualist conception of perception and conception in earlier art, which questioned as no longer useful the presence of the middleman figure of the art critic.

The function of the critic and the function of the artist have been traditionally divided; the artist's concern was the production of the work and the critic's was its evaluation and interpretation. During the past several years a group of young artists evolved the idiom of Conceptual Art, which eliminated this division. Conceptual artists take over the role of the critic in terms of framing their own propositions, ideas, and concepts. (viii)

Robert C. Morgan in Conceptual Art. An American Perspective, describing avant-garde emerging artists operating in New York in the late 50s and 60s through crosscurrent experimental forms and intermedia hybrid activities, as a reaction against the dominance of the modernist formalism in art, argues:

The attacks made by Conceptualist on Formalist aesthetics had a significant impact in widening the boundaries of contemporary art, as evidenced by the emergence of Pluralism in the 1970s. (xiii)

Since the 60s Lucy Lippard points out, in her essay Change and Criticism: Consistency and Small Minds, the task of the contemporary art criticism shifted to taking a closer understanding of the positions of the artists and to supply flexible criteria able to deal with the rapid transformations of art, instead to follow rigid formalist criteria in the description of a new work of art.

In the midst of the flux and transitional confusions that characterize advanced art, a contemporary art critic's major preoccupation must be how to establish criteria flexible enough to encompass rapid and radical change. He must decide how to handle a change of mind (his own as well as the artist's), how to distinguish between innovation and novelty, derivation and originality. The "tradition of the new," by now taken for granted, has drastically altered the roles of both critic and artist, and accordingly, the critic's relationship to the artist has also changed. (23)

Lippard foresees that the issue in art is change and degree of change. Aesthetic values are not based solely on consistency, the "*mark of small minds*," but on the flexibility which is a basic element of the originality of a work of art. New art forms and art movements are challenging art critics and aestheticians with rapid changes and are forcing them to a constant participation more than a distant interpretation of the contemporary process of art in order to understand *the idea in the air* and the related *lattice* of interrelating unlike elements of the new works of art.

Today movements are just that; they have no time to stagnate before they are replaced. Much current art is made in reply to issues raised by previous art. This self-critical aspect need not be strictly evolutionary, but can instead be seen as a continuous lattice of interrelating unlike elements. The connecting grid consists of the ideas and articulations that a new art can force from a constant observer - a substantiation of the "idea in the air," and their relation to the unlike objects - the art. The critical lattice (a four-dimensional one, including the time element) shows not only how the various arts looked when they were first seen, but their interrelationships and possibilities at the time; it can chart the structural growth of these possibilities. A style or so-called movement emerges, crystallizes, splits into several directions over this period. As it does, the critic too finds himself divided. (27)

In The Dematerialization of Art, Lippard foresees how during the '60s the lost of interest by a significant number of artists in the work of art as a physical object, as well as a materialized

economic commodity symbol, provoked a "dematerialization of art", through conceptual art works which emphasised the non visual creative thinking process of "art as idea" and "art as action", which rejected the physical object as a strategic move to reject the economic materialism of the art market built upon objects, since dealers do not sell art-as-idea. She claims that this "disintegration of art" marked the introduction into visual and performing arts of elements of disorder, change, and chaos, which created an intermedia revolution "whose prophet is John Cage" (259), implying the concept of entropy in art, "in a negation of actively ordering parts in favor of the presentation of a whole".

When works of art, like words, are signs that convey ideas, they are not things in themselves but symbols or representatives of things. Such a work is a medium rather than an end in itself or "art-as-art." The medium need not be the message, and some ultra-conceptual art seems to declare that the conventional art media are no longer adequate as media to be messages in themselves. (260)

Lippard points out the need to not confuse the "nonvisual" with the nonvisible where the conceptual focus may be "entirely hidden or unimportant to the success or failure of the work".

A "nonvisual structure" is nonvisual because it does not inspire the usual response to art; it does not make compositional sense, just as the nonrelational primary painting or structure disregards compositional balance. In this way it may incorporate the irrational as well as the rational, disorder as well as order. (273)

During the twentieth century, a reflexive concern characterized the art avant-garde movements, as in A Crack in the Mirror, it was pointed out that "all ask their audience/viewers to become self-aware about their definitions and expectations about art (12).

In The New Art by Gregory Battcock, Allan Kaprow, speaking about the alchemies in art of the 1960's, points out how the idea of interpenetration of art and the external world raise up from him and several other artists, in the context of a new kind of art form which later was called "Happening". A new art form was experimented, in the open use of the total environment, a new fluid spatial situation with the direct and spontaneous involvement of the public and a new name was required for this new art form.

Michael Kirby in his illustrated anthology Happenings clarifies that "there is a prevalent mythology about Happenings" as performances in which there is no script and "things just happen". He denies it as entirely false but raised up like "myths naturally arise where facts are scarce".

Used in an offhand fashion, the word suggests something rather spontaneous that "just happens to happen."....The name "Happening" is unfortunate. It was not intended to go no more than a casual and indifferent event, or that, at best, it is a "performance" to release inhibitions...In another sense it is unfortunate because the word still has those implications of light indifference which such people pick up on. It conveys not only a neutral meaning of "event" or "occurrence," but it implies something unforeseen, something casual, perhaps-unintended, undirected. (11)

As it is pointed out by Gregory Battcock, in The New Art, in the '60s, art as also in the case of Warhol's art, the visual is only a single aspect which moves beyond what Duchamp calls *the retinal* "to encompass idea, emotion, aura, pre-existing significance and conditioned response (230)."

It makes us aware again of objects which by losing their visual identity through constant exposure which yet uprooted from their ordinary contexts are able to make us reflecting upon existing undermining meanings of contemporary existence (234).

In the contemporary panorama of the '80s, Lucy R. Lippard in Mixed Blessing. New Art in a Multicultural America, points out how it is still unapproachable and at the same time unavoidable that the subject of the relationship between the so-called centers and margins of the art world, in which, she claims, for theoreticians and practitioners "the borderlands are porous, restless, often incoherent territory."

Demographics alone demand that a society change as its cultural makeup changes. But the contemporary artworld, a somewhat rebellious satellite of the dominant culture, is better equipped to swallow cross-cultural influences than to savor them. Its presumed inventiveness occurs mainly within given formal and contextual parameters determined by those who control the markets and institutions. (5-6)

Lippard argues about postmodern thought making broader the contemporary art panorama by forcing and changing the oppressive continuity of the Western hegemonic analysis but at the same time creating a form of "deracination."

Postmodern analysis has raised important questions about power, desire, and meaning that are applicable to cross-cultural exchange (although there are times when it seems to analyze everything to shreds, wallowing in textual paranoia.) The most crucial of these insights is the necessity to avoid thinking of other cultures as existing passively in the past, while the present is the property of an active "Western civilization." (11)

She further clarifies the deracination process as it follows:

The blanket denial of "totality" and a metaphorical "essence" encouraged by some deconstructionist theoreticians can be seen as another form of deracination, destabilizing potentially comforting communal identities, pulling the floor (hearth) out from those who may have just found a home, and threatening the permanent atomization of hard-earned self-respect. (12)



## CHAPTER III

### STRATEGIES OF INTERPRETATION

In this chapter the researcher identifies and organizes the primary sources of this inquiry. He describes the field of research and employed interpretative procedures, from an emic or “insider” point of view, as well as from an etic or “outsider” model of reference, in identifying and interpreting ideas, texts, images, underlying themes relating one to the other. The field of inquiry as is seen as an essentially non-stop event, developing in time, but nevertheless a process of moving from misunderstandings to a multicultural understanding.

#### The artist as researcher

The model of the “artist as researcher,” for Ecker in "The Artist as Researcher: The Role of the Artist in Advancing Living Traditions in Art" is an underdetermined conceptual model depending upon its particular cultural context which determines the model’s unique features, while sharing some common features. The researcher from 1986 to 1993 studied the model of “the artist as researcher” outlined by Ecker in his seminars and courses on “Living Traditions in Art”, at New York University.

As part of his training the “artist as researcher” learned to write narrative insider accounts of his experience following the phenomenological procedures described by Ecker in "Instituting Qualitative Evaluation in the Arts":

Time One. Duration of consciousness of the intentional object in the phenomenal field as it appears prior to reflection....

Time Two. Duration of reflection upon the experience had in Time One for the purpose of clarifying whatever qualities, meanings, structures were perceived or had....

Editing. Meta-critical analysis of phenomenological descriptions which adopts a system of marks for the sake of avoiding extensive re-writing....(17)

Edward M. Bruner in his essay “Ethnography as Narrative,” published in The Anthropology of Experience, claims that an important role in reinforcing this group solidarity is played by the storytelling within the groups themselves. He extends the notion of “ethnography as discourse, as a genre of storytelling.”

Stories makes meaning. They operate at the level of semantics in addition to vocabulary and syntax. Just as a story has a beginning, a middle, and an end, culture change, too, almost by definition, takes the form of a sequence with a past, a present, and a future. Our predicament in ethnographic studies of change is that all we have before us is the present, the contemporary scene, and by one means or another we must situate that present in a time sequence....when we talk of gathering or collecting the data as if it were like ripe fruit waiting to be picked, or when we talk of our special anthropological methodologies for reconstructing the past, as if the present were not equally constructed. (140-141)

Ecker describes in "Toward a Phenomenology of Artistic Processes and the Expansion of Living Traditions in Art" his initial experience as an apprentice knifemaker.

By reviewing my shop notes and Woody's detailed "chalk-talks, and by listening to the tape-recording of our lengthy discussions, I was able to reflect upon my initial experiences as an apprentice knifemaker. What became clear is that my own concentration and purpose were the controlling factors at each stage in the process. (78)

Ecker, by describing his apprenticeship, underlines also the important correlation of "subject-and-object" which is fundamental in the understanding of "Plexus Black Box."

The correlation of subject-and-object underlies all of man's ways of being-in-the-world. Hence, to acknowledge the *human* nature of aesthetic inquiry and its domain is at once to free research in art from the false objective/subjective dichotomy assumed in Western institutions that separate scientific activities from artistic activities. (83-84)

Marvin Harris argues with Kenneth L. Pike in Emics and Etics. The Insider/Outsider Debate on the distinction between subjective and objective as insider/outsider point of view:

Participants can be both subjective and objective, and observers can be both subjective and objective. But the discrimination between emic and etic modes depends strictly on the operations employed by the observer. Participants other than those trained as observers or carefully coached in etic concepts by observers cannot provide etic descriptions of their social lives. (50)

Barzun and Graff in The Modern Researcher further argue that the historical verification method of records is governed by probability which is made by subjectivity. They describes an objective judgment as "one made by testing in all ways possible one's subjective impressions, so as to arrive at a knowledge of objects." (184) They also argue how there a misunderstanding on the common notion of subjectivity that needs to be cleared up, as well as in this study the artist as researcher felt the need to verify and support the validity of his and others subjective data, collected in the field research, as it was pointed out in The Modern Researcher:

In loose speech "subjectivity" has come to mean "one person's opinion," usually odd or false; whereas "objective" is taken to mean "what everybody agrees on," or correct opinion....This common belief is quite mistaken.

“Subjective” and “objective” properly apply not to persons and opinions but to sensations and judgment. Every person, that is, every living subject, is necessarily subjective in all his sensations. But some of his subjective sensations are of objects, others of himself, or “subject.” Your toothache is said to be subjective because it occurs within you as a feeling subject....Now only the tooth is real-hence the tendency to believe that an object is somehow “more real,” that is, more lasting, more public, than a purely subjective impression. But objects themselves are known only by subjects-persons-so the distinction is not clear-cut, much less a test of reality. (183)

Ecker in "Introduction: Instituting Qualitative Evaluation in the Arts" points out the misleading notion of subjectivity in art:

“You can’t research art; it’s all subjective! As with any research effort, we must begin by identifying the general problem, which arises out of the widespread belief that subjectivity defines the arts while objectivity defines the sciences. It is the question of the cognitive status of the arts disciplines and whether knowledge-claims can be grounded directly in artistic and aesthetic phenomena as we experience them. Vehement denials of the very possibility are readily found in a survey of the literature. The positivists’ dogma that “whatever exists, exists in some degree, and therefore can be measured,” represents one historical source and provides comfort to those who would equate objectivity with quantification. (A less extreme rejection was printed out on a computer card that was given to me years ago: “if it can’t be measured it’s art, and to hell with it.” (9)

The “artist as researcher” was aware, also for his previous scientific training, of the deep relationship among object, subject and the interference of instrument of observation managed by the subject. In New York, in 1985 he visualized this interrelationship between object and subject in a Plexus art event Goya Time: New York 1985, where 23 artists performed 23 different interpretations of the same subject-object: La Maja. Always in New York, in 1986, he started to perform a series of phenomenological events, “Eating Art,” underlying the phenomenological object-subject correlation. In 1987 during a phenomenological experimental inquiry, Do you think it is possible to eat Andy Warhol if you are eating a Campbell Soup Can?, he has an insight of the object-subject phenomenological correlation as he describes in his following quote from one of his field research’s notes:

There was half moon when I came back at home after my phenomenological experience. It was 2:10 am.

It was for me very hard to accept that bracketing out of relevance my and friends of mine believes was a possible reality in which I could be in the case. I did and I learned something that I refused to do within my friends and my life: to step out and to watch them-us.

Who was them-us? Who was “them?” Who was “me?”

The researcher in his notes used, with phenomenological intention, the hyphen between different words, to underline this correlation between object and subject.

Maxine Sheets-Johnstone in "Phenomenology as a Way of Illuminating Dance" points out this particular linguistic use as a particular mode of Phenomenology. Regarding the hyphen's use she argues that "phenomenology reflects on the meaning of the hyphen between subject and object or between subject and world, a hyphen that indicates the primordial moment at which subject and object have not yet become separate." (130) She further describes the use of the word "lived".

A final example might be given to crystallize even more finely the nature of a phenomenological account. Suppose we wished to gain insight into the nature of the human body in dance. We would not begin by seeing the body within an already imposed framework: the body as a bearer of signs; the body as a thing to be manipulated, trained, or whipped into shape; or the body as the agent of aesthetic behavior. Phenomenologists have elaborated this original, pristine body, this preobjective or preobjectivized body. They call it the lived body. If we want to capture the essence of the lived body in the experience of dance, then we would go back to the lived experience of dance itself, for it is there and only there that might discover the way or ways in which the lived body appears in dance. (133)

The main discovery made by the researcher was that phenomenology was addressed to gain results from the field of experience rather than to explain the method that was applied to achieve the results.

Sheets-Johnstone in "Phenomenology as a Way of Illuminating Dance" describes the phenomenological approach as a pragmatic one:

...our concerns and evaluations would then be with the results of the method, not with the methodological system itself. We are otherwise either talking about the phenomenological method at an abstract level, a level many steps removed from the actual doing of phenomenology, since most probably we have not engaged in phenomenological research or attempted a phenomenological analysis ourselves and have therefore never actually experienced the method;...(140)

The researcher participated "in the first person" in Plexus activities since 1982 in the role of one of the founders as well as artist, under the name of Plexus 23s. Therefore, as Plexus 23s he had his own "stock of knowledge at hand", as Alfred Schutz points out, which allowed him to have access to other historical Plexus participants, and to know locations of records and relics of the project. The artist as researcher started his field research from his consciousness of "being there" in a Heidegger's sense to be an insider in the project under inquiry. The following is an example of a note made by him from the field research:

23s report n. ? + 34, November 6, 1994 AD, 10:25 am,  
Cagliari, Monteurpino.

Defining the coordinates of references of the journey.

“MI-DENTRO-MI-FUORI” (myself-inside-myself-outside).

This quote from Cicci Borghi’s art work recalled to me the David Ecker’s paper at “Art and Science Today: The Role of Imagination”: “On this experiment, we discover that neither you nor I, nor artists, scientists, psychologists, logicians--nobody-- is free to imagine, remember, depict, portray, represent, photograph, measure, or simply observe an object that is both blue and not-blue”. Like I cannot see myself at the same time as a lived insider as well as a lived outsider of the project under study. Therefore I’ll be first of all, scholarly, scientifically, artistically, who I am Plexus 23s, a lived insider of the living project “Plexus Black Box.”

This was-is a result of my phenomenological deconstruction process in progress of the image (A1).

10:45 am

East-West, NYU ICASA Forum, 1986; Micro and Macro, NYU ICASA Forum, 1985.

As well as Franco Meloni, physicist, wrote from an inside horizon of Plexus event, I experienced my emotions’s oxide-reductions of experiencing art.

“Eating Art” is-was a metaphoric concept to describe the phenomenological consciousness of the artist as researcher as a biologist experiencing art as an oxide-reduction reaction. (Like a cold nuclear atomic reaction inside my lived body.) 11 am.

“Il peso del” (the weight of) Dr. Dernini to carry the Well Being Reconciliation Project: “TOUCH-IT-DETACH.-IT”

I am learning, anyway, in 8 years of phenomenology to suspend my beliefs to reduce my phenomenological experience. Therefore I’ll describe the outside from an outside insider point view, recalling “the Debate EMIC and ETIC,” and the complexity of the project under study within the context of the Well Being and Reconciliation project, made within my critical difficulties and personal family circumstances - Rodolfo (my 4 year old son) is protesting that he wants to use this pen that I am using just right now! 11.47am.

The following one is another example of his phenomenological notes, made on May 14, 1993, at 3:30 PM, in David Ecker’s NYU Office, and signed as Plexus 23s. The report is a short speed-up of the presentation made as part of a collective presentation on Monday, May 3, 1993, with Perry Walker, Ava Hsueh , and Luis Vergara, from 7:00 to 8:00 PM, in room 405 of the Barney Building, in David Ecker’s Phenomenology in Art last class.

In 1986 , 23 PLEXUS friends played the role of the “social world” as a mirror through which it was only possible to see my refracted self portrait. I was a refracted vision of the social world. The horizon or context of the world places “the setting-into-work of truth” in which the work of art functions. Each phenomenological reduction or analysis of an art work has its own historical world related to the particular time and space on which the analysis is taking place.

“It is true or not” was one of my phenomenological questions when on February 18, 1987, at Patrizia Anichini Gallery, 7 East 20th Street, New York, as a continuation field research of my 1986 NYU course E90.2605, Phenomenology and the Arts, I phenomenologically inquired 13 artists with “Do you think it is possible to eat Andy Warhol if you eat a Campbell soup?”

I kept notes of my field research on “Eating Art” in a series of logo books. These logo books gave me the frame on which I practised the epoche’, the forestructure of my first

interpretation, again and again to be phenomenologically reduced as part of my ongoing PLEXUS process of human experience.

As an artist/researcher I started a series of logo-books made by images and texts related to my in the first person 'Eating Art' experience .

My interpretation as an active performing act goes beyond form or syntax and ordinary language. In classroom, through appreciative attitude of all participants we tried to create an aesthetic phenomenological experience by transforming an ordinary class into an artistic environment, and then as an act of consciousness, moving back and forth through it, we performed our epoche' in progress.

At the entrance of the class, "We declare this is our/your epoche' in progress while we-you are here" was written on the black board, on which a T-shirt with written "I think therefore I am fish" was hanging on the wall....

His phenomenological reports and notes from the field allowed the researcher to practice a continuous phenomenological exercise by writing notes of his experience with Plexus and of his student experience at New York University, working at the same time as graduate assistant, before, at the I.C.A.S.A., (International Center for Advance Studies in Arts) at New York University, and, then, at NYU Summer Institute of Living Traditions in Art, made in collaboration with I.S.A.L.T.A.(International Society for the Advancement of Living Traditions in Art).

This training allowed him to become more familiar with the current issues in art, which turned out to be very useful in his understanding of the artistic, cultural, and institutional context in which "Plexus Black Box" originated and how it was positioned within the "artworld." He kept during all his field research a skeptically suspicious attitude regarding his possibility of suspending his beliefs, while again and again he restarted his phenomenological reduction by bracketing out again pre-reflective meanings. The phenomenological notes and logbooks took by the researcher from 1986 to the present were used by him to keep an attentive consciousness upon learning to describe not only what was appearing in his experience but also how it appeared.

Sheets-Johnstone in "Phenomenology as a Way of Illuminating Dance" underlines the need to search out a special language in describing a phenomenological experience in order to be able to "capture precisely the quality of the thing as it is experienced." (132) She further states that:

To arrive at essential descriptions one needs to transcend habitual formulations of the object or phenomenon; one must come to grips linguistically with the phenomenon as it gives itself in experience. This means forging a new language that captures precisely the quality-the physiognomy-of the phenomenon in question. (135)

The researcher tries to place himself consciously inside and outside the artistic center or centers of "Plexus Black Box," he was conscious that to do it and to describe his ongoing-living-

experience as it was/is lived was a hard task, something which at the same time changed his earlier perceptions and provided him with new outside and inside views. Ecker in "The Possibility of a Multicultural Art Education" describes this kind of change of perception:

What I have learned is that placing oneself in an artistic center of another culture inevitably changes not only one's earlier perceptions of that culture and its arts but also provides a new "outside" view of one's own culture, art, and art education. (18)

### Field Research

The researcher, from the beginnings of his study in 1986, has collected and organized in chronological order all Plexus documents available to him as a founder and as an active member of Plexus, 23S. He photocopied documents in a chronological order, without any classification, and packaged them in 13 booklets, one per year from 1982 to 1993, and another one with records related to the cultural context from which Plexus originated.

Then, following the distinction, proposed by Barzun and Graff in The Modern Researcher, between records as intentional transmitters of fact and relics as unpremeditated transmitters of fact ((166), the researcher organized chronologically categories of records and relics as follows:

Written records: Press releases; announcements; newsletters; pamphlets and publications; diaries and reports; catalogues; slides, photos, negatives.

Oral records: anecdotes and tales; recordings in various forms (videotape, audiotape, etc.).

Relics: artifacts; memorabilia, legal and business documents; letters, notes.

The researcher applied systematically historical methodological verification procedures described by Barzun and Graff (109 -144) to verify names and dates and attributions to sources and to guide him with a methodological historical criticism during his contemporary art archaeological research in writing his narrative historical reconstruction of the facts related to "Plexus Black Box".

The historical method ascertains the truth by means of common sense. When that sense is systematically applied, it becomes a stronger and sharper instrument than is usually found at work in daily life. It shows a closer attention to detail and a stouter hold on consecutiveness and order. The exercise of these capacities turns into a new power by which new intellectual possessions may be acquired (168).

The complete collection made by the researcher of all Plexus editorial records such as booklets, newsletters, pamphlets, shows presentations, press releases, from 1982 to the present, was

submitted to the procedures of verification and then became a primary source with participant's recollections for the identification of the primary sources of the study.

Often in this study and in the title reference is made to a "black box." From 1989 to the present in Plexus events, "Plexus Black Boxes" are used metaphorically or literally, in which case they could hold some or many objects made for various events. Sometimes a "Plexus Black Box" did not hold any items, but simply symbolized the items which after years of activities became too numerous to be contained and carried or transported to the various places where Plexus events were held. "Plexus Black Box" appeared in many places. In time it became a symbol which contained the memory of the past events or the history of past events of Plexus.

During his field research he proceeded as follows:

#### Step 1.

In the spring 1994, at the Alfa Diallo's House of Originals, in the Lower East Side of New York, a group combining curators and participants of the closing event of "Plexus Black Box" met with the artist as researcher to open the two boxes that had been deposited at Alfa Diallo's on November 12, 1993, from the Rosenberg Gallery event, and to identify their related items.

The procedure was as follows:

1. Each item was marked with a white round label and numbered.
2. A name of reference was also assigned to each item.
3. The list of items, their number and name was recorded by the researcher.

#### Step 2

The researcher sent a letter to a group of Plexus participants, following the delimitation of the study, asking for their collaboration, copy of the letter is attached in the appendix B. After few weeks, the researcher contacted them to supply a full explanation of the purpose of his request. Plexus members' recollections gathered were either in written or in recorded interviews. In the case of the recorded interviews, the artist as researcher took care that these were transcribed and translated from their original language in the case of Italian and Senegalese recollections. These transcriptions were approved and also in some cases re-edited by each individual before he could proceed further in his following interpretative procedures. Within the deadline of 1994, indicated in his letter requesting collaboration, he received few written recollections.



In November of 1994, with the assistance of a member of his Dissertation Committee, Prof. Angiola Churchill, he was able to pull off a series of sessions of oral recollections by N.Y. participants. These oral recollections from tapes were then transcribed.

Also it became evident the infeasibility to proceed to the accomplishment of the second step, the organization of a panel discussion forum with participants, after the gathering of all their recollections, as it was stated in his letter requesting collaboration, see full text in the appendix B. This second step was therefore drop out by him.

He sent back to all participants their transcripts in 1994 and in 1995, receiving few approval and editing within a period of a year. Recollections by Plexus participants are fully reported in the appendix E and some example of the deconstructionist "double reading" model employed by the researcher is reported in chapter IV and in his close reading in chapter VI as emic accounts of the project under study.

From the summer 1994 to the end of 1996, the artist as researcher travelled around the various locations such as New York, Rome, Cagliari, Carloforte (Sardinia), Dakar, and Amsterdam, to examine all available plexus records and relics and to collect what it was possible to collect or to document what was not possible to remove from the premises. All records examined and/or collected were not specifically related to the project under study. He studied the collection of records and relics, item by item, to determine how texts, images, objects, symbols, related consistently to the ongoing project under study.

The researcher examined Plexus records at the following sources:

on board of the Elisabeth boat, in Carloforte; at Franco Meloni's computer at the University of Cagliari; at Gaetano Brundu's Plexus Storage in Cagliari; at Anna Saba's in Cagliari; at Giancarlo Schiaffini's and Fabrizio Bertuccioli's in Rome; at Assane M'Baye's and Youssouph Traore's Club Litteraire David Diop in Dakar; at Willem Brugman's and Frans Evers in Amsterdam.

In this step of the field research, the researcher viewed 3153 pictures, 3888 negatives, 75 videotapes and 25 audiotapes.

The researcher viewed methodologically all video tapes like doing a insider phenomenological experience. In Time 1, the artist as researcher attended the view as well as fully possible conscious of his double identity of participant as well as of perceiver, as an "outsider" as well as an "insider"

of the "recorded" art experience. In Time 2, after few minutes of silent reflection, the artist as researcher wrote a description of his aesthetic experience of these screenings, tape per tape. In Time 3, with a color code blue for an "editing" procedure, the artist as researcher marked what from the Time 2 of interviews or written recollections he considered to be relevant, following Schutz's system of relevances, for his further "speed-up" displacement of descriptions of experiences. Ecker describes the "editing" and "the speed-up" procedures in "Introduction: Instituting Qualitative Evaluation in the Arts":

Editing: meta-critical analysis of phenomenological descriptions which adopts a system of marks for the sake of avoiding extensive re-writing. (17)

Speed-up: tendency or strategy of individuals in an industrial and technological society to perceive or judge human behavior in terms of the clock-time required to accomplish a specified task; e.g. the measure of productivity, intelligence, creativity, or goodness. In academic and artistic contexts the "speed-up" is operative when stipulated meanings or scientific explanations displace experiences and descriptions of experiences because they are quicker. (18)

From the fall 1994 to the summer 1996, the researcher with a stock of knowledge at hand examined all collected records and notebooks of his field research. Because of the great quantity of records accumulated over 12 years, it became evident that it would be totally impractical to classify all them. He reduced the numbering of the records under study to the items of the two boxes, (A) and (B) sealed as closing act of the Rosenberg Gallery event on November '93 because these items were considered by his stock of knowledge at hand inclusive of all other records and relics related to the study. The researcher applied in the beginning a phenomenological deconstruction approach, starting with a close reading of the first item of the box A, labelled A1 at Alfa Diallo's 1994 inventory. A1 was a marginal photo, outside the box, on its covering plastic strip.

Figure 2

Plexus Black Box Item A1: Plexus Compressionist Art Process Example



G. Chaikin, G. Schiaffini, , Rome, 1991, photo by the researcher.

After his close reading of A1, the researcher began to deconstruct phenomenologically all relevant recall images, identified from his 1994 phenomenological notebook in order to identify relevant features and invariables.

The researcher in the summer 1996 interrupted his close reading process of individual fragments of “Plexus Black Box” because he realized that the method was not proper to describe the whole art project.

### Step 3

The researcher outlined his field research procedures in his notebook with time and space in which the procedure took place. He identified relevances and placed them in chronological order. These relevances were related to “Plexus Black Box” in different ways. The first appearance of the name “Plexus Black Box” was identified in the occasion of the artopera of 1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte, at the Metateatro, in Rome, in 1989.

The name "Plexus Black Box" was referred both to an artifact as well as to an idea. Later, more containers holding records and relics of historical events were made as components of several Plexus art events.

While the full chronology of Plexus activities is reported in the Appendix C, the researcher outlined a short chronology of events that were identified and verified during the field research as directly pertinent to the project under study, while a full chronology of Plexus activities is reported in Appendix C. This short following chronology has the aim to facilitate the "outsider" reader to understand emic narratives reported in following chapters.

In 1978, in Rome, at Il Cielo performance space, Art Slaves Auction Show, an cultural event organized by LIACA for cultural freedom in Italy.

In 1981, in New York, at New York University, The Artist in the First Person, a cultural program presented by the Italian Center for Contemporary Culture of New York University and produced by the artists.

In 1984, in New York, in the middle of East 6th Street, between Avenue A and B, in the Lower East Side. In Order to Survive, a community art event, performed by hundred artists.

In 1985, in New York, at CUANDO Community Cultural Center, Goya Time, New York, 1985, the first Plexus artopera, performed by hundred artists.

In 1985, in New York, at CUANDO, Purgatorio Show, in the Night of No Moon, a collaborative event presented as a open call for the future international community cultural house in New York, performed by 350 artists.

In 1986, in New York, at CUANDO, Eve, an Art Opera, about Escape for Donna Purgatorius from 1986 Anno Domini by the Multinational Chain Gang of Downtown N.Y., second artopera, performed by 220 artists.

In 1987, in Gavoi, Sardinia, Il Serpente di Pietra, (The Serpent of Stone), the first International art event of Plexus presented as an art co-opera, performed by 160 artists.

In 1988, in New York, Rome, Carloforte (Sardinia), Dakar, Plexus Art Slavery Manifesto, a series of group photo shots, performed by hundreds of artists gathering together. It was concluded with a street parade from Dakar to the island of Goree, inside the House of the Slaves, where was staged a public presentation of the Plexus project to open a Art World Bank in Goree.

In 1988, in New York, Cagliari, Carloforte, Dakar, The Serpent, a series of performance, interconnected performed as a single travelling event, in five acts, starting from New York, at CUANDO and performed at New York University as an interactive happening Il Viaggio del

Serpente. Its third act was on board of Elisabeth boat in Carloforte and the fourth one Tradizione e Modernita' was in Cagliari, (Sardinia) and ended in the House of the Slaves in Goree, Dakar.

In March of 1989, in New York, the 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium was established by a group of representatives of Universities, cultural and community organizations.

In March of 1989, in New York, at CUANDO, in the Lower East Side, Repatriation of Art Into the Community, a Plexus-CUANDO event was staged as an report to the community from 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium.

In April of 1989, in New York, at Rivington School, in the Lower East Side, Repatriation of Art Into the Community, a Plexus-CUANDO event was staged as report to the community from the Columbus Consortium.

In May of 1989, in New York, at Nada School, in the Lower East Side, Repatriation of Art Into the Community, a Plexus-CUANDO event was staged as third report to the community from 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium.

In May of 1989, in New York, at the Institute of Computer Arts, School of Visual Arts, The Departure of An Art Human Shuttle For Freedom Journeying to the Realm of a New Planet called Time-Art, an performance on-line art event , staging the departure of the 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium for Italy.

In June of 1989, in Cagliari, at the University Department of Physics it was performed as a happening the arrival of the Plexus Art Shuttle.

In July of 1989, in Rome, at the Metateatro, 1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte, an artopera, staged the first historical presentation of "Plexus Black Box" as an artifact as well as an idea.

In February of 1990, in Rome, at the Metateatro, 1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte, within "Plexus Black Box" staged the departure of the "Equipaggio Telematico" (Telematic Team.)

In May of 1990, in Amsterdam, in a park, Plexus Black Box Ethno-Reality and Plexus Black Hole Ethno-Reality are performed as a "modular construction" event.

In June of 1990, in Rome, at the Ridotto del Colosseo, 1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte, Part III: Plexus Black Box, is performed as an art coopera.

In July of 1990, in Rome, at the Metateatro, Plexus Black Box a Multicultural Data Bank for the Caravella dell'Arte, is held as a round table.

In July of 1990, in Carloforte, in Sardinia, Elisabeth, La Caravella dell'Arte, a performance, staged the first presentation of the project "The Well Being in the XXI Century."

In December of 1990 in Rome, at the Teatro in Trastevere, 1992 Cristoforo Colombo Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte: part IV, a performance, staging the presentation of "Plexus Black Box" project to Mons. Dante Balboni, a Vatican art scholar.

In July of 1991, in Carloforte, on board the Elisabeth boat, it was performed the presentation of the program of the Well Being in the XXI Century Symposium.

In November of 1991, in Cagliari, "Plexus International Storage" is opened.

In October of 1992, in Carloforte, Columbus Reconciliation Forum on "The Well Being in the XXI Century," by the 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium.

In December of 1992, in New York, at the Barney Building of New York University, In Order to Survive, The Voyage of the Elisabeth, a collaborative art event, staged as a report to the community from the 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium.

In October of 1993, in New York, at St. John the Divine Cathedral, Marconi Columbus Open Call for the Well Being in the XXI Century, an art collaborative event.

In October of 1993, in New York, at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, The Repatriation of Art into the Community, a collaborative art event.

In November of 1993, in New York, at the Rosenberg Gallery of New York University, A Contract to be Negotiated: Columbus Egg, The Living Plexus Black Box of "The Voyage of the Elisabeth," an art installation in progress, within a 2 week program of art events.

After November of 1993, "Plexus Black Box," as an ongoing travelling art project, was performed in many events which are fully reported in Appendix C.

Following the model of "the artist as researcher" he developed the outlined glossary of the most frequent concepts used by Plexus participants, reported in Chapter I, as a practical tool as it is pointed out by Ecker in "New Directions for Art and Art Criticism from a Multicultural Perspective,"

A practical corrective strategy that my students and I employ as artist-researchers in our investigations of living traditions around the world is to develop a glossary of terms in the language of the master artist/artisan/craftsperson of a particular tradition. (5)

### Procedures of Interpretation

The researcher started his hermeneutical phenomenological investigation by applying the 4 operational rules described by Don Ihde in Experimental Phenomenology. An Introduction. First, as an artist-researcher he fully attended and described his own experience of “Plexus Black Box” and of the others’s participants. Second, he delimited the focus of the field of experience, following Ihde’s second operational rule, by framing within his "insider" Plexus experience. The third rule by Ihde followed by him was to avoid any kind of hierarchic understanding of the field of experience by the *horizontalization* of all phenomena of experiences of “Plexus Black Box”. This procedure prevented him to take too fast decisions in relation the hierarchic values of some features as more important or fundamental than others. As fourth procedure he looked for the invariants of the experience as essential features of the study in order to understand the directional shape of experience, “the intentionality,” the correlation of what he experienced with how he experienced it, “the mode of being experienced.” The stratification model of the five different levels of discourse proposed by Ecker and Kaelin in The Limits of Aesthetic Inquiry: A Guide to Educational Research is applied by the researcher to screen and to identify all different levels of discourse in “Plexus Black Box” in looking for invariants. The procedural steps followed by the artist as researcher are the following:

1. He experienced “Plexus Black Box” and he perceived the recollections of other Plexus participants as a lived experience of it;
2. He made a reflection upon his experience and upon the other ones, noting what was relevant following the system of relevances, described by Alfred Schutz in Reflections on the Problem of Relevances;

The researcher moved from the bottom of the stratification, “Plexus Black Box,” as an event, to the top of the ladder, to its meta-theoretical conceptual framework.

The researcher started his interpretative procedures by underlining in his field research notes with a yellow or blue color mark if that note was relevant for his experience, experienced as an artifact or as an art performance/event, which it is placed by Ecker and Kaelin at the bottom of their

taxonomy. What he believed for his stock of knowledge at hand was related to a metatheoretical level, at the top of the ladder-schema made by Ecker and Kaelin, he marked instead with a red color code. This procedure facilitated later his identification and understanding of the invariants as overlapping meaningful underlying themes of the study reported in Chapter VI. He analyzed as topical relevances the images and texts emerged during the epoché he made during his field research experience by following the system of relevances proposed by Alfred Schutz in Reflections on the Problem of Relevances, in terms of their referential adequacy. Those relevances which he claims to be well-grounded in his stock of knowledge at hand, after verifications with other Plexus participants, were by him re-casted in order to be further investigated. The stock of knowledge at hand of the researcher as interpreter, as sedimentation of various previous experiences, determined his system of interpretational, topical and motivational relevances, from which depended his capacity to reflect from more than his own immediate cultural point of view. The autobiographical system of relevances of the researcher, who was conscious of prevailing “lived” presence, at any moment of his interpretational procedures, guided his “interest” in making decisions regarding the investigation and, in turn by bringing inside marginal materials from the background, determines the horizon of the thematic hermeneutical field of the study.

The researcher was conscious of his “actual interest” as Plexus 23s at the margins of the field, while he was performing “artificially” the system of relevances, and in turn his motivation created the structurization of a “voluntary” thematic center and of its surrounding horizontal margins.

The "actual interest" of the researcher as an "insider," Plexus 23s, while giving acknowledgment to the limits of the level of his investigation, allowed him to define a borderline of a part of “Plexus Black Box” to be placed under question.

Schutz points out that all questions are interrelated with the other and that there are not isolated questions, and those hidden in the margin of the field, may turn to be in the ongoing process of reflection topically relevant of the thematic center or *kernel*. The researcher in order to *grasp as such* prevailing “lived” presence in his "insider" experience within his etic preparatory procedures, performed a series of artificial voluntary acts of reflection through which he should experience “Plexus Black Box” from more than one single horizon and look for intrinsic relevant structures.



His Plexus 23s' motivational relevances lead him to learn how to act on his interpretative decisions understood as sedimentation of previous experiences which constituted the system of his topical relevances, which in turn led the system of interpretative relevances on which the artist as researcher built his interpretative choice, resolving artificially his initial doubt to have a true and correct interpretation. The researcher, by not having a privileged position upon which to start to build his system of relevances, but experiencing all together not separated chronologically, gained freedom from previous sedimentations, by performing a continuous shifting from his initial artificial move, the deconstruction of the first item (A1). He modified gradually his horizontal interpretations, coming from each main topic chosen at that moment from the turn of his thematic kernel, which was modified continuously by his shifting system of interpretational relevances. He created in this way different observational conditions, which in turn allowed him to have new additional interpretatively relevant material. This shifting process was followed by the researcher until when, the problem at hand was sufficiently clarified, and he solved his suspicion or doubt of the correctness of his "insider" emic procedures. He applied the insider's stock of knowledge at hand in a "step-by-step analysis" to predelineate the lines of his inquiry by selecting as his first artificial delimitation or determination of the segment of his experiences of the project under study, the lived experience of Plexus 23s, which allowed him to assume that kind of necessary "counterpoint structure" and "artificial split" of the unity of his personality, described by Schutz.

Figure 3

Plexus 23s Compressionist Double Reading Example



The artist as researcher looking at a photo of him as Plexus 23s.  
Photo by Lynne Kanter, New York, 1986.

Each reader has his/her own angle of interpretation depending upon his/her personality, education, and culture. Even if we can achieve distance, Gadamer states that “we actually interpret an interpretation.” Gadamer points out the collapse of the horizon of interpretation in his essay “Composition and Interpretation,” within The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays, and argues that:

We may well ask whether we can interpret such ambiguity except by revealing that ambiguity. This brings us right back to our question concerning the particular connection between composition and interpretation within the overall relationship between the activity of interpretation and the activity of artistic creation. Art demands interpretation because of its inexhaustible ambiguity. It cannot be satisfactorily translated in terms of conceptual knowledge. (69)

Within the context of the pluralistic perspectives of the contemporary philosophy of art, which is further marked for Gadamer, in spite of tireless efforts to discover the definitive word of interpretation, by the renunciation of certainty of an “objectively” interpreted experience, the researcher deconstructed “insiders “ accounts and papers, reported in Chapter IV and in Appendix D,

as revealing multicultural sources of a pluralistic understanding of “Plexus Black Box” against a single dominant position of interpretation of it.

The researcher employed the “double” and “bifurcated writing” described by Jacques Derrida, as part of his strategy of interpretation, placing at the margins of the “insiders” accounts his interpretation. In clarifying how this “double” operates, within a deconstructed system, Derrida in Positions explains:

By means of this double, and precisely stratified, dislodged and dislodging, writing, we must also mark the interval between inversion, which brings low what was high, and the irruptive emergence of a new “concept,” a concept that can no longer be, and never could be, included in the previous regime. If this interval, this biface or biphas, can be inscribed only in a bifurcated writing (and this holds first of all for a new concept of writing, that *simultaneously* provokes the overturning of the hierarchy speech/writing, and the entire system attached to it, *and* releases the dissonance of a writing within speech, thereby disorganizing the entire inherited order and invading the entire field), then it can only be marked in what I would call a *grouped* textual field: in the last analysis it is impossible to *point* it out, for a unilinear text, or a punctual *position*, an operation signed by a single author, are all by definition incapable of practicing this interval. (42)

Figure 4

#### Plexus "Bifurcated" Reading Example



G. Schiaffini and M. Serino “appointing” themselves in the photo of the Metateatro Group Shot, Rome, 1988, photo by the researcher.

## CHAPTER IV

### "INSIDER" ACCOUNTS: DOUBLE WRITING AND DOUBLE READING

In this Chapter, the researcher applies the deconstructionist model of the "bifurcated writing" by Jacques Derrida, reported at page 6, as a strategic interpretational procedure to present a "double reading" of "insider" accounts by Plexus participants in parallel with the researcher's interpretation. His emic account is intentionally written at the margins of them, with the purpose to allow these emic accounts to have relevance in the study, claiming that, in aesthetic inquiries, "insiders" like the artists as well as their emic accounts, do not have fully received a relevant academic consideration, which instead is given to the formal analysis of the "outsider" researcher as an "objective" interpretation.

The following "bifurcated" writing is presented by the researcher with the intention to offer a "double reading" of "insider" narratives as well as an overall insight of employed researcher's interpretational strategies. The researcher applied the "bifurcated" model as a coherent shifting procedure, with Alfred Schutz's system of relevances, as reported at page 29.

As direct quotation therefore the researcher could not use any scholarly grammatica device for a further editing of some of following emic accounts reported in this Chapter and in Chapter VI. "Insider" accounts are reported within a single spacing, like direct quotations, with no indented paragraphs when they are transcripts from interviews.

#### Insiders Narrative

Giancarlo Schiaffini

Transcript of the interview made by the researcher in Rome, in December of 1995.

It is approved by Giancarlo Schiaffini.

<p>The seminal idea for setting up the multiform structure complex of Plexus was conceived in 1981 in the kitchen of east 6th street, in New York, by Sandro Dernini, Antonello Neri, Massimo Coen and myself. There, we were talking about how to organize a space to perform many different kind of music. This conversation began some years before, in 1978, when I started my collaboration with Sandro in Cagliari. I played some concerts of improvised music and we were talking about the role of improvisation, the role of music, the role of performance and of performance art and of any kind of performance you may think of. So there we placed the seed of Plexus several years before it came out. In the kitchen, in 1981, we were three performers and a maitre a penser, a provoker, to stimulate our creativity, all of us were and we are in several performing arts, music theatre, movies as well, dealing with improvisation in different sites, sometimes we play music completely composed organized, sometimes totally improvised, with all possibilities between the two extremes. When you perform or improvise, even in a theatre piece, a lot parameters you have to consider, which are may be the skeleton of such a work, in the definition of my work and of a project like Plexus. For me it is very difficult to define my work. First, I like my work. I do my work because I like my work. I find some ways of life, desires, aims, in my work. I think that I am not one dimension man, all my work is often very various, as composer, sometimes I compose for other people, sometimes for myself, sometimes I just write simple structures for improvisers or just improvise other structures, generally. Anyway, for me it is important to be involved in the work, from its birthtime, from the first concept of the work, and thinking that the work lives just in the moment in which it actually performs, because all composition speculation, planning, are finalized to the moment in which the work will takes place and that is the real moment in which the work</p>	<p>The first "insider" Schiaffini offers an historical description of how the seminal idea of Plexus began as an open multiform complex of many different art realities.</p> <p>By bringing together into Plexus an account of music, theatre, performance art, cinema, and other artforms, he points out the open features of Plexus artform.</p> <p>Schiaffini, presenting himself as not one dimension person, underlines the creative value of the improvisation process in the development of Plexus process, dealing with many parameters and components, at the same time, and sometimes placed in different sites and times.</p> <p>Schiaffini, with his historical</p>
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<p>acts. Plexus is a great reality, with many faces and different realizations, my contribution to Plexus was bringing all my experience in performing arts, in music, in theatre, in different ways to make art, in brainstorming which served to setting up the ideas and Plexus events within a larger landscape. I worked with John Cage, Luigi Nono, with several international groups and theatre directors, even with certain importance in improvisation and many of these pieces, on which I worked, were fine written but started with collective improvisation by the soloists works. We know that beyond the improvisation, beyond the actual happening, there is a long work of years, a hard training which makes that the improvisation never can be improvised and happenings just cannot happen. They are the results of years working on structures, ability and attitude to modify structures in a moment, an attitude to relate oneself to the other ones working with you, it is a certain kind of discipline or a certain kind of rigorous study and very long and very alive. I worked with many different realities in the field of art and Plexus may be is one of the most complex, one of the most universal, in Plexus we find so many different kinds of performances of art, actions and exhibitions, which is important as a kind of summa of all works since the Living Theatre, Cage, all the schools of improviser art. So we have Plexus, may be, as a big container, just in the sense of not a neutral container but of something which can contain several different artforms, performing arts, a container which is in relationship with what is contained and allows to cross, to link different realities, different musicians, performers, different facts, which may be never do otherwise. Plexus Black Box performances were so rich in interrelations among all elements playing and involved which was just not a collection of different form of art or players, with different languages, minds, and from different art fields and characters like painters, theatre players, musicians, singers, poets, dancers, videomen, but inside there was a big cohesion, a quite big interaction and relationship among participants, which was born there in the action and it was not planned from us in advance. What was in the '80s in art and in the '90s is different. The '80s was a period of time which was very hard against the performance art. It was</p>	<p>avant-garde recollection, points out, and at once re-opens, the experimental role of "open musical forms" in the Plexus art process. John Cage and others experimented with "open forms" through an improvised musical collective process where only few elements were fixed. These performance took place in the '60s with the open purpose to generate new art forms, exchange new ideas and energies, and provide a revolt against the formalism of modern art. Schiaffini, by underscoring the hard task of modifying structures, moments and people, foresees Plexus like as a kind of "summa" of the avant-garde previous experiences. "Plexus Black Box" was made in the '80s as an synergetic container where the "insider" reality is interconnected with the "outsider" one, speaking</p>
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<p>very difficult to work for the performer artists in the '80s because the performance art, which in the late '60s and 70's was "a la mode," it was not anymore in the wave and the media and the organizing structures were not anymore interested in it. Now in the '90s it seems that there is a new opening toward improvisation and performance art, in a different way respect the past, with people more curious, with a more accurate interest. It is a positive signal.</p>	<p>many different languages, but anyway communicating to each other, as both members of a many faceted complex. Schiaffini, as a not planned in advance action event, re-opens "Plexus Black Box" and allows many different worlds and artforms to come out. He has a vision wider than of the closed artworld's one, which builds upon the dominant misleading use of the word "art" as referred only to visual art.</p>
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Mitch Ross

Transcript of the interview made by the Researcher in New York, in November of 1994. It is approved by Mitch Ross.

<p>Plexus acted in 1982-83 as an art performance space, for one and half year, and then in the mid of 1984 moved in the Lower East Side as The Shuttle Theatre which acted more as an art jazz night club. I started during this period to exchange ideas and books on the work by Norbert Wiener with Sandro. Plexus Black Box as concept came later. It is a computer term but it is also a metaphor for what cannot be defined. In all computers programs what they do not understand goes in a black box. Plexus Black Box project is basically a container for all miscellanies archetypes of art which are not explainable, when they not fit in the existing stereotypes of artworlds of music, theatre, visual art, etc. Plexus every two -three years goes into a reborn phase, redefining what is going to do and Plexus Black Box serves for it. The big problem that Plexus is facing is money. A community-based urban intelligentsia, placed in different cities in the world, is the today core of Plexus and each has theoretically pieces of the original archetype of Plexus Black Box turned into a metaphor. None knows what it is and what they are doing with it. But it allow all Plexus people to feel part of that culture and to make their own definition of it, which is fine because more information goes into and more information has to be defined. Plexus Black Box is an artform of artificial intelligence which about nobody knows in advance because it is made as an happening with no money. In the end, the methodology of the conceptual Plexus Black Box may be considered as the methodology of the construction of a Faustian toy, in which more non useful information goes in there, in turn in Plexus Black Box more metamorphosis will come out.</p>	<p>Mitch Ross, as m.c. (master of ceremony), presented Plexus 6, a Zone for the Next Zone, a cabaret program, held in the fall of 1983, at the Plexus performance space in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan.</p> <p>It was conceived as an open flexible multiform container for all miscellany of performances which could not fit into "traditional" experimental multimedia programs.</p> <p>Ross was exploring new ideas and their implications, like cybernetics and Norbert Wiener's concern of "the human use of the human being."</p> <p>Mitch describes Plexus</p>
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	<p>cybernetic retroactive control and its ethical concern on reflective feedback shaping through several "reborn phases, "Plexus Black Box," as an open artificial artform that offers the opportunity to many people to feel part of a cultural context, without knowing in advance the full picture of it and their reason for doing it.</p>
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Figure 5

Plexus 6, A Zone for the Next Zone



M. Ross as M.C., Plexus space, New York, 1983, photo by L. Kanter.



L. Kanter and F. Evers, Ridotto del Colosseo, Rome, 1990, photo by M. Brusa.

Lynne Kanter

Transcript of the interview made by the researcher in New York, in August of 1995.

It is approved and edited by Lynne Kanter.

<p>In 1982 I took pictures at the Plexus performance space in Chelsea and I was the first to document Plexus events on an ongoing basis and following Plexus on the Lower East Side and then in Rome.</p> <p>In 1985 I performed in the multilayered Plexus event Goya Time.</p> <p>Since 1986 I created a kind of iconic Marilyn Monroe character, "performing" and taking polaroid photos of what was happening on stage. In the early 80's I continued to experiment with photo self layered Plexus event Goya Time.</p> <p>Since 1986 I created a kind of iconic Marilyn Monroe character, "performing" and taking polaroid photos of what was happening on stage. In the early 80's I continued to portraits, often using mirrors, which led to the Plexus recall performances where I made photos of the photos in the photos of previous events in which were other photo in the photos, etc. This led to a polaroid book collaboration with Sandro who started to "play" with the all the polaroids, creating a kind of art altar installation.</p> <p>My experience in Plexus during the 80's was a receiving of energy connection within a world wide group. Plexus gave a broader context and a deeper meaning to my artistic endeavors than they had in isolation. Suddenly, I was less isolated in the world. To my mind, the world became more fragmented in the 90's age of Intenet.</p>	<p>Kanter describes Plexus compressionist process of taking "photos in the photos" of Plexus participants holding photos of other Plexus evenrs, or of the same people but of other events, holding photos of preview events, and creating new art operatic forms which are characteristic features of the Plexus "compressionist" art process which was theorized by Lenny Horowitz in the middle of the 80's. Kanter also points out how Plexus experience increased her artistic awareness of being part of a collective art effort which turned into an healing art process and a release of energy from art.</p>
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Figure 6

Plexus Artopera Example: Goya Time, 1985, New York



B. Morris as il Maestro, C.U.A.N.D.O., New York, 1985, photo by J. Day.

Figure 7

Goya Time, 1985, New York



Royal Family, C.U.A.N.D.O., New York, 1985, photo by J. Day

## Willem Brugman

Transcript of the interview made by the researcher in Amsterdam, in  
December of 1996. It is approved by Willem Brugman.

<p>My story with Plexus started when Plexus was a physical location on the west side of New York city. A retrospective of my work and collaborations with people took place in that space. I was a performer and I performed there <i>Christopher Columbus Reflections from His Deathbed</i>. Without me realizing it, as soon as I entered in that space and put this story on stage, I had already started a journey through universal mythology. Before I know it I was already playing a character in that journey, in this case the character of Christopher Columbus. Since then, I made in New York several participations in Plexus art co-operas like <i>Eve</i> and <i>The Night of No Moon</i>. When I left the United States and went back to Amsterdam then Sandro was very fast to pick me up and hook me back up with him in Sardinia and in Rome. So this became a fantastic experience in terms of our communication. We established ourself in Gavoi village in the center of Sardinia with 160 artists from all over the world. From there we sent out a communication into free space, outer space, it was a message of freedom for art and communication. That was an extraordinary development, of course, from just coming in solo and being focused on the aspects of your own piece of art and from there going to the ocean of story telling of the universal mythological journey and to move from the sea into the electric sea and go into outer space. This is basically what I did with Plexus up until I came back in Amsterdam to build a Plexus working station. So we went around trying to find out where there were very specific archetypal elements of the journey' story telling. In Amsterdam was an</p>	<p>Willem Brugman describes his "lived" intense experience in Plexus as a performer as well as a theatre director. In 1986 in the Plexus "artopera" <i>Eve</i>, Brugman experimented with Butch Morris the concept of modular construction with which he had already previously experimented as a combination of music, dance, theatre, video, and architectural stage design. Modular construction in Plexus was used by Brugman as a participatory facilitating process to merge, in a transparent multi-layer energetic design, all possible art forms without a dominance of one form</p>
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<p>artist Hans Hiemers who had brought elements from the black slaves who had fled the plantations in Surinam and had gone back into the jungle, called themselves marons and tried to find a life back into nature away from all these opposing structures. After all because of the slave trade by the Dutch they were brought over from Goree to Surinam. So we built this working station.</p> <p>Back in Amsterdam, we're talking 1987-88, it was important to make a Plexus working station where all kinds of different ethnic groups could meet in order to prepare the commemorations around the Atlantic Basin in terms of 500 years of colonial history in the light of Christopher Columbus. And Amsterdam, of course, there were all the points of departure of the slave trade.</p> <p>So Goree, was also reconnected in there. In this level, where my participation in Plexus took on absolutely magic, realistic dimensions.</p> <p>I now found myself playing parts as a performer that more and more is focused on aspects of male identity, if there is something as universal as male identity, then how would it be expressed. "Kosai", which was the war cry of the marons, who were the slaves who had fled back into the jungles of Surinam, and then tried to find their own existence, became a very important symbol for freedom. the symbol that was used at that time was the ark.</p> <p>Hans had built a huge ark that was located in the center of the harbor and everybody who was passing by could see this symbol of continuity the ark of course being a symbol of gathering, collecting, safeguarding all kinds of elements of life.</p> <p>So after Sardinia, Rome and Amsterdam I then did some preliminary explorations, with Sandro in Dakar, in the House of the Slaves built by the Dutch. We knocked on that door of no return and we demanded a new contract between the peoples no longer a contract of buyers and sellers and transporters and in between people, but a</p>	<p>over the other one, without a</p> <p>hierarchic directional structure. It</p> <p>is shaped on the idea of a</p> <p>gathering of energies coming</p> <p>together into the Plexus</p> <p>"artcooperas" from many</p> <p>different art fields. The Plexus</p> <p>organizational principle for</p> <p>Brugman has to be an</p> <p>architectural strategy, mutually</p> <p>made, for the gathering of energy</p> <p>into the box as "artcooperas,"</p> <p>where many different individuals,</p> <p>from different fields and</p> <p>disciplines, in time and space,</p> <p>follow a poetic storyline. Plexus'</p> <p>creative environment and</p> <p>processes create the possibility</p> <p>for fitting many more individual</p> <p>expressions into an overall</p> <p>collaborative work, in an art</p> <p>coopera. He describes how the</p>
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<p>contract that would explain the birthright dignity of every human being.</p> <p>After Dakar adventures then at the end of the 80's and into the 90's we were back in Rome and participating in what for me became the last kind of Plexus event I found myself again playing like a male archetype playing a patriarchal dressed in uniform carrying a transparent globe having a stop watch in terms of time, carrying a compass, knowing the directions of the wind.</p> <p>As an act of juxtaposition in 1989, in Rome, at our performance in which we closed the Black Box, I reopened it because I was looking for a loose end, the loose end that was perhaps already in the box. Because I thought that the story was not finished, the first phase of the development of Plexus had maybe come to an end and I also believed that in any repetitive process however varied its outcomes you have to make on purpose a mistake in order to let the end out.</p> <p>In '89, I felt that there was no time to close the box, the story was incomplete.</p> <p>That many contributions were still lost, they were still at the sea, they had not been delivered yet, in order to close the box the whole body had to be in there and we knew that legs were missing, and bits and pieces of "la macchina corporea," the body machine of Plexus.</p> <p>Modular construction is a design and choreography of energy: it is an organizational principle and it is a strategy, for what I call a design and a choreography of energy.</p> <p>A modular construction, as it happened to take place in the art cooperas, there were so many different individuals coming from many different fields and specialties that had to be organized in time and space, and they had to be organized also in a story telling way so a modular construction is an organizational principle by which every fragment, every subject, every object that takes part in the total generic energy explosion and is guaranteed its own identity.</p> <p>I maybe can only say it in a more poetic or esoteric sense, if a drop of water joins the ocean,</p>	<p>modular construction process has</p> <p>its roots in the historical avant</p> <p>garde, through all its</p> <p>contemporary development, from</p> <p>De Stijl, to Dada, to surrealism,</p> <p>arriving at John Cage and The</p> <p>Living Theater. Brugman</p> <p>explains why he had to reopen</p> <p>"Plexus Black Box" and why its</p> <p>closing in Rome in 1989 was not</p> <p>feasible due to incompleteness of</p> <p>ingredients, depending upon its</p> <p>open identity. He argues that too</p> <p>many legs were missed in the</p> <p>Plexus "bodymachine" to allow</p> <p>the closing of the box. Brugman</p> <p>sees this operating process made</p> <p>by a collaborative work as a</p> <p>"macchina corporea," a Plexus</p> <p>bodymachine made by bodies and</p> <p>minds working naturally together,</p> <p>"allowing, inviting,</p>
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<p>it does not lose its characteristics.</p> <p>This is the principal of modular construction whatever effort or excess energy spent in the process will find its constructive expression of possibilities in the overall work.</p> <p>Well, a modular construction is a facilitating process that allows the individual energies to pass through and to gather a purity of energy which maybe can be approached by talking about light.</p> <p>So if I go back to modular construction and make a relationship with Butch Morris - in my work in New York it must have been in 1985 when we worked at the Wooster Groups Performing Garage and we did <i>Image of None</i> – it says it already – could the experience of reality have lead to images of none or nothing. In it, a writer was invited to write a few things and he had some opening lines that explained very well in a poetic way the nature of modular construction.</p> <p>The lines by Seiku Sondayada – an AfroAmerican writer – said “the ocean must be built from a common law which says that everything goes into the ocean that lines and lines like these swell the sea and grow like sea weed unless you can see the properties of kelp in the tangled modern mass it’s merely dirty water.”</p> <p>So you can say that modular construction is a law seems to be natural law of allowing, inviting acknowledging and respecting the contributions that people make.</p> <p>Here I’ll make a quick reference to the writer Franz Kafka who, in his book about America, confronts us with the nature theatre of Oklahoma.</p> <p>The essence of the nature theatre of Oklahoma is that there is a place for everybody in the nature theatre of Oklahoma – in this concept there is something to be done for everybody.</p> <p>So you can also say in that way the modular construction is participatory process for everybody.</p> <p>Well you can say that in theatre in different parts</p>	<p>acknowledging and respecting the contributions that people make."</p> <p>For Brugman, in "Plexus Black Box," liquid forms and fluid energies are involved that cannot be kept separated or kept out of the box, "as drops of water in the sea," as he poetically describes it.</p> <p>Before using the modular construction process in 1986 in the "artopera" <i>Eve</i>, conducted by Butch Morris, another "insider" participant of this study,</p> <p>Brugman and Morris started to experiment this art process in 1985 at Wooster Group Performing Garage. It was an experience of different states of reality leading to poetical images of emptiness. Brugman argues that the modular construction process is a natural form of</p>
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<p>of the world but especially in the non western world, there are still many collective, community- based theatre programs.</p> <p>It still seems to be a very natural working process. In the west, though, it has disappeared. If you want to have some historical references about that it you can say that perhaps the largest modular construction for a long time was the Living Theater.</p> <p>The Living Theater turned it around better than talking about theatre is to talk about life. So they were the first ones who really broke out of the restrictions of theatre in its physical space in time and location.</p> <p>I think that when we go into the history of the 20th Century art, Franz is kind of a specialist in that field. So here we have to think maybe about De Stijl – people who gathered around architecture and design – then maybe we have to zoom on Dada – people who tried to bring in surrealistic aspects - so we have to think about the surrealists.</p> <p>We have to think about the area in the beginning of the century by which music , dance and theatre as a music theatre concept came together. We have to make sure that Black Box will tell us after what had happened, what dramatic event had happened up to the point of the present, that life would continue that certain things are and will be preserved.</p>	<p>theatre open to everybody. A natural concept which, he argues, Western culture has almost lost.</p> <p>It is, however, still present in many forms of community-based theater in other parts of the world. He argues that in the history of the avant-garde art movement in the 20th Century, there was always a tendency to merge together music, theatre, dance, visual art, and architecture that is the historical background from where Plexus modular construction is coming from as an open multi-arts and multi-forms participatory process for everybody.</p>
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## Miguel Algarin

Transcript of the interview made by the researcher in New York, in August of 1995.

It is approved and edited by Miguel Algarin.

<p>Plexus Black Box is an attempt to document many different activities made by Plexus in the mid 80's and in the beginning of the 90's. It is made to document the ultimate statement by artists about this last decade of this millennium when old diseases which have mutated are coming back in new forms.</p> <p>What we are learning is that life in the planet cannot be lived without accepting pain and death as an active part of it. My poetry readings with the Nuyorican Poets Cafe at the Shuttle Theatre, in 1984, dealt with the theme that artists played the role of the elite of the working class.</p> <p>If we do not plant our feet on the sidewalk we will lose our constituency.</p> <p>The rich will buy us, but they will not stand by us. My poem <i>BodyBee Calling from the XXIst Century</i> is a call for the poetic mind and the scientific mind to meet because we create metaphors that the public at large understand.</p> <p>We must create information about our biological body and our universe with clear simple language understood by the general public.</p> <p>The aesthetic image of Plexus is the volume of the artists' free participation in mass events such as the group shots in which a hundred artists gathered together in the middle of East Sixth Street just for a photo.</p> <p>The occasion in Plexus is the aesthetic sense, making an occasion into a happening and reflecting on that for its historical value.</p> <p>This is what I saw in Plexus, it plans its own historical value. The art operas were occasions where an enormous amount of work was made to collect a huge quantity of players together and then the event either works or does not work.</p> <p>When it works, we all contribute to an idea which is itself in the making not made but "</p>	<p>Miguel Algarin understands Plexus aesthetic value for the intensity of its artistic process, creating concepts, turning occasions into art events, addressing many artistic, social and life issues related to the last decade of the XX Century. He recalls the first group photo shot of the musicians, poets, other artists performers, and, the local community supporters gathered together in 1984 in the middle of East Sixth Street, between Avenues A and B in front of the Shuttle Theatre. There William Parker performed his jazz statement "<i>In Order to Survive</i>," and all the others gave their contributions. As poet as well as scholar, Algarin speaks metaphorically about "the volume" of the free participation of many artists and people in Plexus events. The pitch as well</p>
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making."

In that way the value of the aesthetics of Plexus is creating artistic concepts that hit emotions.

Figure 8  
BodyBee Calling from the 21st Century  
by Miguel Algarin

**XXXIII**

After transplanting/repairing body organs,  
at what point is self still of woman born?  
after becoming a beehive of transplants,  
grafted parts, after replacements.

is there still a self from woman born?

after biological break down

and up to date repairing,

will self be a patch-work-of-spare-parts?

2019: Synthetic membranes introduced  
to repair stomachs, intestines, kidneys.

2021: Fluorocarbon liquids/base for  
artificial blood/patented in 2008/  
will with synthetic polyvinyl hydrogel replace  
natural vitreous liquids.

2034: Chemical muscles: still shunned  
by body engineers developing techniques  
to force the body into regenerating  
its missing or damaged parts.

2045: Techniques for grafts to brain area  
controlling physiological processes  
are in daily use/all work on cerebral  
cognitive thought areas is advanced  
though performed selectively.

2050: Alien tissue ruled accessory  
graft receiver retains the I original/  
foreign tissue subdued and acclimated  
by self of woman born still risking to persist.

after body, after repairs, after transplants,  
after self, after beehive of organs, after grafts,  
after patch-work replaces self of woman born,  
after after, after that! What and where?

(54)

as the resonance of these events  
grew over these years,  
compressed into a frozen "black  
box" since 1989. The pitch of the  
intensity of participating people  
turned up again the volume of  
Plexus in 1996, in Rome, in  
occasion of the Plexus art event  
*From Welfare to Well Being:*  
*Eating Art, Get the Best from*  
*Your Food, Food for All*, as a  
parallel special event to the FAO  
World Food Summit.

There, Algarin performed his  
poem *BodyBee Calling from the*  
*XXIst Century* which Willem  
Brugman performed in 1987 at  
the Plexus International event in  
Sardinia. Plexus creates such  
strong aesthetic intensity that  
Algarin foresaw, as an aesthetic  
image, its ability to reflect  
collectively on its own historical  
significance.

## Alfa Diallo

The transcript of the interview made by the researcher, in New York, in November of 1994.

It is approved by Alfa Diallo.

<p><i>La Maison des Originals</i> is a place particular in the community of Loisada for selling art works. The idea of <i>One On One</i> 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. The poem <i>One on One</i> was written in early 80's and I performed it, during the <i>In Order to Survive</i> community event, at the Shuttle Theatre, in New York, when Plexus moved there, in the Lower East Side, in 1984. The poem <i>Loisada</i> is about my experience to live in the Lower East Side. There is nothing stopping people to travel, everyday there are boats with people going to Africa. It should make sense if Plexus has a boat of black Americans going back to Africa and if you have a boat of all different people going back to Africa. It is a very important point to be very careful to understand the difficulties of organizing the art slaves boat. In all these years, since 1982, Plexus was a positive experience for me, because it was a celebration of coming together, which by itself is positive. It is not easy to recall so many different events starting from 1982 when in Chelsea Plexus acted as a performance space. In 1987 I became a member of the board of directors of Plexus in New York. My poem <i>The Box</i> was used to close "<i>Plexus Black Box</i>" event, in 1993, at NYU Rosenberg Gallery. The poem <i>Presence Africain</i> in Plexus was used in 1986 as statement of Plexus position. The experience with Plexus is like with New York, a melting pot made by many people which you cannot leave any out. The beauty of Plexus is that we were strong enough to be able to cross all conflicts, beside the fact that we have different origins, the feeling</p>	<p>Alfa Diallo's poem <i>One on One</i> was performed in 1984 during the <i>In Order to Survive</i> street event in the front to the Shuttle Theatre. "<i>One on One</i>" is a universal African vision of a collective concept that the poem incorporates together with Alfa Diallo's radical memory against all colonialist and racist discriminations. Alfa's poem <i>Loisada</i> was used as opening statement of the New York University Lower East Side Summer Institute of Living Tradition in Art and his poem <i>The Box</i> was instead the opening statement of the last Plexus event</p>
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that we have, we were able to do what we had to do without to put in front our confrontations to block all the project and to go together and to move further the project to go on. There was a mystic force behind us to pass through all the economic difficulties and to answer to the question: for whom I am doing this?	under study <i>A Contract to be Negotiated: The Columbus Egg, The Living Plexus Black Box of "The Voyage of the Elisabeth"</i> in 1993.
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### Arturo Lindsay

Transcript of the interview made by the researcher, in Cagliari, in December of 1995.

It is approved by Arturo Lindsay.

Plexus for me has been a journey and like in all journeys there are great and challenging moments to be recalled. As my contribution to Plexus, I thought of 3 mayor areas in which I made a contribution: intellectual, administrative and artistic. In the intellectual area I had many brainstorming meetings in committees, in bars and restaurants, by telephone, etc. in which Plexus vision, aesthetically, politically, socially, was hammered out. In the administrative area I was part of the board of directors of the legal Plexus entity in New York. But it failed because of Plexus fluid and dynamic identity which could not stay within too many constraints as they are requested by an administrative legal form. We started with a structure of a community organization in the Lower East Side around 1984-86. I gave my recollection as time 1 of a reflective action. I started with my performances in 1984 at the Shuttle Lab, in the Lower East Side. I like to recall my performance: ' <i>Artist contemplates the fate of whose who speak of freedom, dedicated to Mandela</i> ', at CUANDO in 1985. In 1986, on occasion of the departure of the art slaves ship art opera, at CUANDO, I made one of my first Homage to Ana Mandieta.	Arturo Lindsay is the Plexus Ancestral Messenger. His Plexus vision is like a journey through the sea of his experience of so many Plexus events and activities, crossing many different times and spaces. He claims the impossibility for Plexus as a fluid form, free from boundages, to be able to deal with more formal, copact, solid, admistrative or legal constraints. Lindsay's ritual art performances
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<p>In Rome in 1987, I buried under ground, in the garden of Gianni Villella, a wood statuette ancestral messenger. I participated in a futuristic art parade in the streets of Trastevere, before taking the ferryboat to go to Sardinia. In Gavoi, Sardinia, where I worked with others artists for 4 days with the art materials we found there or we brought with us. During the construction of my installation, a wood box, the first historical box in the history of Plexus, I secretly buried in a ceremony with Lorenzo Pace and Miguel Algarin, the second statuette, in bronze, of the ancestral messenger. The wood box with the signatures of all the artists was burned in a ritual performance. On this fire Sandro Dernini burned his clothes. The ashes of the ritual ceremony were, from the ferryboat coming back to Rome, spread out into the Mediterranean watersea. My work, which I am still doing, was inspired to the notion of ancestry and of messengers. In 1989 my participation was related against the celebration issue in 1992 of Columbus's landing in the Americas. This controversial issue let began a period of dialogues, confrontations, arguments and debates, among all us in Plexus, about how to recognize the historical anniversary without celebrating it with a Plexus event in 1992. The issue of reconciliation raised up from their strong beliefs against a Columbus's celebration and the Christopher Columbus Consortium as well as the Well Being Consortium grew up from this reconciliation Plexus claim which is the direction on which Plexus is moving now. Some of the originals ideas of Plexus Black Box are ideas which have been pursued since the beginning of Plexus like environment and now well-being, health, food, etc., which came out of some creative thoughts we were exploring in New York. My role in Plexus has been the ancestral messenger since when he became a founder member of the original Plexus group. Plexus Black Box is build upon the recording and documenting processes and activities of Plexus in the past 12 years.</p>	<p>since the time of 1984 left a series of marks in the history of Plexus. Starting from his performance on the sidewalk on the street of the Shuttle Theatre to his burial performance in Rome in 1987. The researcher as artist participated in 1988 with the retrival of the statuette, "Ancestral Messenger" It was then buried in the island of Goree by a group of Plexus participants, including, Willem Brugam, Franco Meloni, Assane M'Baye, Youssouph Traore, Zulu M'Baye and myself. Lindsay's statuette became the symbolic "geografic" coordinate for the landing in Goree of Plexus art freedom journey. His ancestral art boxes were the first Plexus boxes made to keep alive Plexus</p>
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<p>Many activities of what is happening today in the postmodern art world can be view as an expansion of the vary ideas of multiculturalism, radical democracy, ethical issues and cultural diversity in thoughts and ideas, that we, first, explored before in the mid 80's, as positive terms of reference in a broader open context, which was also the reason why we could not put too much efforts in the organizative structure of Plexus. This brings back also the claim that democracy is chaos. Plexus has operated a lot with chaos from where many creative art works came out. That kind of chaotic driving force brings us together today but the difference with the past it is that it seems that we are more experts, after so many years and so many mistakes, to pull up together all these diversities with the respect of the diversity of opinions. Columbus issue was a good training for all of us to grow up.Plexus Black Box has not a defined definition. It does not work in definition terms. It is a fluid thought which grows, changes, moves differently for each of us. It is made to not be framed. For my definition it is a fluid idea, with a lot concerns, it is a radical democracy, it is chaos.</p>	<p>memory. His white box staged at Nada School in the Lower East Side in 1989 performed the ritual repatriation of art and of Plexus into the Community. Lindsay's disagreement on the original celebrative departure of the Christopher Columbus Consortium changed the route correction of Plexus towards the idea of "reconciliation". Lindsay claims for Plexus the credit to be one of the first postmodern movements that in the early '80s started to explore and to deal with the multicultural issue of radical democracy, social chaos, and cultural diversity. Lindsay argues that for its own internal diversity and fluid nature, "Plexus Black Box" cannot be defined by aesthetic theories.</p>
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Butch Morris

Transcript of the interview made by the researcher in New York, in November of 1994.  
It is approved by Butch Morris.

<p>My contribution to Plexus came from composing improvisation and conducting improvisation which deal with a community of improvisers and which lead to my definition of Plexus Black Box as a multidisciplinary way for vary kind of artforms to work together and for different artists to collaborate together. My first performing association with Plexus was with <i>Goya's Time</i> in 1985 and during this process came out the theory of the art opera which characterized Plexus collaboration. It was characterized by multiplex levels of perspectives of the event and its particular surroundings open to be followed in all possible direction by the audience.</p> <p>The result became a cooperative art product of a collective imagination. Plexus artform was truly about understanding a particular moment in time and history. What was new in this artform is a significant individual collective art expression of different vision of the same idea as it was in <i>Goya's Time</i> presented by 23 visual artists.</p> <p>The artists working with each other was the big new artform in Plexus at the significant level of what they produced. If this collective artcoopera model should be understood as a community based art project and performed experimentally as such in schools, it could produce significant collaborative results.</p>	<p>Butch Morris conceives an improvised conduction as a collective multiform improvised art process that makes possible for many artists to work together with different experiences and visions.</p> <p>This improvised conduction lead together with the modular construction process to the creation of Plexus "artopera" merging all artforms together in a libretto as espresion of a collective immagination. Morris claims for "<i>Plexus Black Box</i>"</p> <p>the function of understanding the particular historical time in which is placed, with its surroundings and to provide access for the participants to this historical context.</p>
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Figure 9

Plexus Black Box Ritual Group Shot Example



Ridotto del Colosseo Theatre, Rome, 1990, photo by V. Ibanez

Figure 10

Plexus Community-Based Art Event Example



D. Boyle and R.Politi, Purgatorio Show, C.U.A.N.D.O., New York, 1985,  
photo by A. DiMartino.

David Boyle

Transcript from the interview made by the researcher in New York, in November of 1994.

It is approved and edited by David Boyle.

<p><i>Plexus Black Box</i> is a recent theoretical development, made by a group of Plexus members in order to find some closure for Plexus. I started to get involved with Plexus at the time of the Shuttle Theater, in 1984, in the Lower East Side of New York, when it was located in 6th street in the basement of a Homesteader building run by one of my favorite mentors, Sarah Farley. She was a founder of a group called L.A.N.D. ( Local Action for Neighborhood Development). She pointed out that Plexus should be supported in the community, and I went with it. Her support was a result of the community oriented nature of Plexus. When I met for the first time Sandro Dernini I was impressed by the way in which art was presented as a nutritional element in our life and in our community. Contact with art and cultural events of all sorts enhanced the well being of the person by reducing stress and making the mechanism for the metabolization of food run smoother. I realized that Plexus created a momentum for many local artists to move toward large mass events as community groups actions, that we called the CUANDO's period. The beauty of these community actions was that they were organized with no advance preparation but only with an open call sent out from person to person and friend to friend only few days before. You had to live in the community to know about it. The event was so short, like one hour or few hours, that it was over before all the people were in. Plexus did for the first time the instant art event. if you didn't know about it before it started it was over before you could get there. The artists used anything that they could</p>	<p>Boyle, as a local community militant in the Lower East Side Community, describes his insider experience from a community homesteader perspective which offers an emic understanding of "Plexus" and of "Plexus Black Box" as a community-based art project. He presents Plexus CUANDO's period as a collective effort against the gentrification process in the Lower East Side. How the information was spread out, during the Plexus CUANDO large mass events described by Boyle is a clear understanding of how Plexus was planted in the Community, as part of the local</p>
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<p>find to make art for these events which never stayed up for longer than a few hours. One of these mass community art events was made in 1986 at CUANDO, it was called <i>The Purgatorio Show</i>, for the departure of the metaphoric art slave ship. Here a large quantity of artists, 220, had to deal creatively with the use of a limited space, 4x4sq. ft., for each, the configuration of the spaces forming upon the floor the shape of the ship. On that occasion the artist Gianfranco Mantegna used a tall ladder to expand in vertical his art piece dedicated to Joseph Beuys. He attached anchors into the ceiling and hung over his art space in a parachute harness. The doors of the entrance were made by a bronze sculpture piece by Eve Vaterlaus. My homesteaders organization offered the security of the show and we were dressed with warriors costumes that we were given from the Costume Collection. There were Roman centurions, Vikings and we did not allow any people from the audience to go inside where all artists, with their helpers (more than 350 participant persons) were preparing the show. When the audience came in, they found all the room full of people and smoke from a theatre smoke machine, colored lights and sound from a 14 piece jazz orchestra. 6 or 7 camerapersons were moving in the crowd documenting the event. It was the first time that the documentation in Plexus took visibility more than just as a video documentation and started to become a form of art in and of itself. The video cameras moved through the drifting smoke with their little red lights blinking in schools like fish. Plexus as an art movement contributed to the integration of different uses of art media in new art forms, actively extending the point where documentation stops and art begins. As in the case of the Plexus tradition to make photos called group shots which turned into an art form. It was Leonard Horowitz who pioneered this Plexus compressionist use of the photo of the photo. In each event, Plexus members assembled together for large photos, like family</p>	<p>underground art network.</p> <p>Underground art networks historically have played an important role in the avant-garde culture, as refuge for the genesis of new ideas and artforms. He describes the Plexus compressionist process as coherent with the compression and the freezing of Plexus into a box, together with its history, relics and records. These documents were able to be not absolute because they were appointed as art works. They were used as a community source of knowledge, as a recursive art device for memory and for the survival of Plexus. Boyle's emic account describes in the particular how a Plexus CUANDO event looked like,</p>
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<p>picnic photos. Groups of Plexus artists answering the open call were photographed together. These "group shots" became bigger and bigger. By 1988 Plexus artists were intentionally holding up the photos of the previous group shots while creating new group shots. These photos were then brought to subsequent group shots achieving the effect a group of people holding a group shot which was holding a group shot and so on. Producing the effect of compressing into one photo content with a lens could be amplified again. The community was part of it and this was why Sarah Farley supported Plexus. During my participation in Plexus, I met many Plexus members and I discovered that there were many different interpretations about what was Plexus. What was interesting for me was that each definition of Plexus did not exclude other definitions and I felt that this multiplicity was a positive sign of openness. In Plexus I felt there was an insider theoretical framework for a community intelligentsia for the support of Plexus concepts like compressionism by Horowitz or modular construction by Willem Brugman, who came up to build different Plexus art operas with no rehearsals, on the concept that it was not time to know in advance all what was going on stage but to know only some modules of the productions, technical modules, acting modules, lights modules, music modules. Without the need to go together in time and space before the show, going in conversation without knowing what the others modules were doing, until when they were all together on stage. In reference to <i>Plexus Black Box</i> I suggested the freezing of Plexus into a time capsule concept as it was <i>Plexus Black Box</i> because we felt in that time, 1989, there was a diminished interest in maintaining Plexus movement and it had an impasse which could compromise its future. Knowing from history that art movements have tendencies to collapse, instead of waiting for it I propose to freeze it in a conceptual art form as it</p>	<p>giving in this way an insight understanding why "Plexus Black Box" was so full of records and relics. Boyle points out how this documentation turned to be the first survival step of Plexus to grow by allowing participants to share it as part of a common art experience, within an open social environment. Boyle was the "insider" who participated in conceiving the "freezing" of Plexus in 1989 in Rome and made one of the two boxes (the squared wood brown light one) that was one of the two boxes of "<i>The Living Plexus Black Box</i>" event at the Rosenberg Gallery in 1993 which ended with Boyle performing with his truck the repatriation of "<i>The Living Box</i>" into the community. Later he</p>
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<p>was conceived <i>Plexus Black Box</i> until when the conditions were not improved.</p>	<p>flight with "the Box" in Sardinia, in 1994, for the art event: <i>Art and Science Today: The Role of Imagination</i>, organized by Franco Meloni and others at the University of Cagliari. This is part of another Plexus study to be made: "<i>Plexus Black Box: From 1993 to the Present Time</i>".</p>
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### Eve Vaterlaus

Written recollection made by the artist, in New City, N.Y., in 1994.

<p>I recollect contributing, as an artist, to three of the Plexus events. The first was <i>Goya Time</i>, during which a large group of artists worked from a model who presented herself as Goya's Clothed Maja. The event was open to the public, who strolled among the working artists as they drew, sculpted, painted, photographed, etc. I drew the nude Maja on paper I had silkscreened with a photo of the surface of Lake Michigan.</p> <p>The second Plexus event was <i>The Night of No Moon</i>, a memorial to Ralston Farina. This was a huge exhibition with hundreds of artists who entirely filled a big old school building, known as CUANDO, overflowing out into the roof, and filling every space with art &amp; performance. I worked in the large old empty swimming pool,</p>	<p>Eve Vaterlaus performed "Eve" at the Plexus <i>Eve</i> artopera, in CUANDO, in 1986, leading the escape of the art slave ship from the New York Artworld.</p> <p>Eve describes accurately her difficulties as an artist dealing with an eclectic complex of problems raised from the creation, execution, and installment of artworks related</p>
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<p>where I installed my Diver's Tomb, five huge photo blueprints of divers and swimmers installed on the white tile walls around the pool. The diver plunging from air to water is an obvious and old symbol for the migration the soul makes in death. This piece was technically difficult, if simple in concept. The photo blueprints were so large that they had to be exposed in the dark at a great distance for very long periods of time in order to print. I had to completely darken my entire loft for about a week and live with the ongoing exposures of my images, which supplied the only light. Then, when it came time to install the images, printed on fragile blueprint paper, in the pool I found that the walls were continually damp from condensation and it was difficult to stick them up, but I did find a solution. This piece was very satisfying in every way, beginning with shooting the photos, through solving the execution, the final look of the piece, and it was completely new work for me.</p> <p>The third Plexus event in which I took part, <i>Eve</i>, also pushed me into form of work I had never done before. I made <i>The Gates of Paradise</i> for the entrance to <i>Eve</i>, an Art Opera. The gates were two doors made of 16 relief panels, like old bronze cathedral doors. The panels showed Adam &amp; Eve in the Garden, the expulsion from the garden, and, on the outside, how a life difficulty gave rise to human culture, art, literature, war, &amp; etcetera, which was not necessary or possible in paradise. For the night of the performance of <i>Eve</i>, all of the contributing artists were exhibited with their work. I took advantage of the occasion to present myself in a figleaf, which I had always wanted to try, but had never gotten around to before. Thus, my experiences with Plexus always demanded growth and change and new achievements in my work, as well as growth through meeting and working with large gangs of artists I would not have otherwise met. I am a painter and sculptor. I graduate from art school, R.I.S.D., and then</p>	<p>to three Plexus events performed at CUANDO. She offers a complete emic understanding of her qualitative artistic process in the solution of problems. Her "insider" insight provides a clear model of the "problem-solution-problem continuum" of the artistic process as was claimed by David W. Ecker in "The Artistic Process as Qualitative Problem Solving" (285). By applying his stock of knowlegde at hand, the researcher from the large quantity of records of "Plexus Black Box" identified the following two "bifurcated" photos of artworks by Eve Vaterlaus, which can complete this double reading chapter. In the first, the image of Eve, in a figleaf, performing Eve at <i>Eve</i>, at the community cultural center CUANDO, in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, in 1986. In the second one, there is the image of her artwork "<i>Homonculus</i>", which was exhibited as the "<i>Living Plexus Black Box</i>" at the closing event</p>
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<p>travelled widely by land and sea. After my travel &amp; a very brief marriage I lived and worked in Brooklyn for about 11 years. I work in many media because for me different ideas demand different forms. I am also stimulated by the process of finding solutions to difficult technical problems and I enjoy researching for the work as well as making it. The type of idea that most often inspires me is personal and subconscious, subjective, yet immersed in natural phenomena: water, plant life, animal &amp; mineral.</p>	<p>under study, <i>A Contract to be Negotiated</i>, <i>Columbus Egg: The Living Plexus Black Box of "The Voyage of the Elisabeth</i>, held at the Rosenbeg Gallery in 1993. These "bifurcated" images by Eve are offered by the researcher to open new insight of understanding of artists' growth, change and global achievements in life.</p>
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Figure 11

Plexus Artopera Bifurcated Reading Example



E. Vaterlaus performing Eve in *Eve*, with  
J. Strand, at C.U.A.N.D.O., New York,  
1986, photo by J. Day.

Figure 12

Homunculus by E. Vaterlaus





## CHAPTER V

### A HISTORICAL EMIC ACCOUNT BY THE ARTIST AS RESEARCHER

In this chapter the “insider” artist as researcher offers in the first person a historical emic account of the story of “Plexus Black Box” and its origin.

As one of the founders of Plexus, he conducts his emic reconstruction in a chronological order, like a reportage.

His chronological and emic report was made by following the verification procedures by Barzum and Graff in The Modern Researcher, described in the Chapter III, at pages 82-83, and in the methodological introduction to the organization of the study, reported in the Chapter I, at pages 17-18.

The researcher, by applying the model of “the artist as researcher,” conducted his historical account with continuous verification with other “insiders”, and by following his “stock of knowledge” which was verified through his own collection of historical Plexus records and relics.

#### The “Insider” Narrative

First I would like to introduce myself, I am Plexus 23s, a creative survivalist from the island of Sardinia, at the centre of the Western Mediterranean sea.

My nationality is Italian but my culture is "Sarda" (Sardinian). In Sardinia around 2000 B.C. there was a Bronze Age culture, named Nuraghic culture, from 1500 BC to 800 BC, there was a very complex social society which built a system of 17.000 stone towers in the island of Sardinia. Very little is known of this culture. It had a very strong and long history in fighting cultural colonialization since the time of the Phoenicians, Romans, Spaniards on until the current Italian cultural trend.

Figure 13

Plexus 23s Nuraghic “Contorted” Emic Account



Sandro Dernini as a Nuraghic warrior in Eve, holding Paolo Buggiani’s Minotaur, C.U.A.N.D.O., New York, 1986, photo J. Day.

I have a double cultural identity, “Sarda” (Sardinian) as well as Italian. To accomplish such a complex reflective challenge to write in English my emic account, in a chronological order, I am dealing with my English and Italian language difficulties. These difficulties come from my individual personality as well as from my inner cultural iSardaî identity which resists against the many forms of domination, including economic and linguistic. My writing in English is a challenge to my thought processes. I am cognizant that after seventeen years in New York and three years in London when I was eighteen, my English has not improved. I start to understand that this is part of that kind of iresistance of cultural identityî of the Sardinian people described by Prof. Giovanni Lilliu, member of the National Italian Academy of Lincei, in his Costante Resistenziale Sarda.

My ancestral Nuraghic cultural identity reinforced my fighting against the domination of the Artworld and of the Art “Isms” as well as influenced the identity of my performances in Plexus and before it.

Historically, in 1979, in Rome, at Il Cielo, an alternative performance space, I participated to conceive and organize the first art slave market show by the Italian League of Alternative Cultural Associations, L.I.A.C.A, in support of the fighting for freedom of cultural expression and association in Italy.

The L.I.A.C.A. had an important and not yet documented role in the defence of cultural freedom in Italy in the 70s, within the particular political and cultural context of that historical period when in Italy the police attempted to close all performance and alternative cultural spaces as underground sites of revolt and protest against the Italian political government. One of the places where L.I.A.C.A. used to meet was in my house, in Piazza San Giovanni della Malva. I was member of L.I.A.C.A. as representative of Spazio A, the first performance space that was opened in Cagliari, the capital city of Sardinia, in 1976 by myself with Marilisa Piga, Pietro Zambelli, Annamaria Pillosu, Piernicola Cocco, and other friends.

After my moving in New York, in the beginning of 1981, I presented a program of performances, named The Artist in the First Person, sponsored by the Center for Italian Contemporary Culture at New York University, which I had conceived in 1980 and codirected with Prof. Luigi Ballerini, director of the Italian Studies Program at the French and Italian Department of New York University. The Artist in the First Person was an interdisciplinary oriented cultural program. Each event of the program was supported economically by the artist as the independent producer of it. This program had as its goal to introduce contemporary Italian artists to the New York art community, through NYU arts departments. At that time, Italian contemporary artists were poorly supported by the Italian Cultural Institute. In the Fall of 1981, Giancarlo Schiaffini, a contemporary Italian musician became part of the program with Antonello Neri and Massimo Cohen. On that occasion we started to discuss the limitations which confined national centers and cultural institutes in presenting contemporary art works. In all night talks in the kitchen of my small studio, in the Lower East Side, we tried to identify a new format of cultural space where artists from all art fields and cultures could have the necessary freedom to express themselves. We envisioned a place where we could develop our researches, have a free and open critical dialogue, with no mediators (art critics, dealers, etc. ) of the Artworld or from the art

market. We felt that it was necessary for the artists in the first person to create their own channels, spaces, self definitions or no definitions, in order to survive, from the interferences of the artmarket. In the beginning of 1982, two Italian architects, Roberto Brambilla and Gianni Longo, both executives of the Institute for Environmental Action, a non profit organization based in New York, proposed to me the opening of a new cultural center in a 7.000 sq.ft. space, free of rent, as part of a larger real estate project under development by them in the Chelsea neighborhood of New York, at 530 West 25th. Street. Richard Flood, an art critic, and at the time also book editor and managing editor of Art Forum Magazine, who curated at the art space PS1 the show Beast, agreed to join us. In June of 1982 we opened Plexus performance space under the umbrella of Plexus International Urban Forum, Inc., a non profit organization. The first opening statement of mission of Plexus was written by Richard Flood, full document in the appendix D:

Plexus is about the city - any city, every city. It is about the wonder of a skyline that won't stop climbing and a blanket of pollution that can't stop spreading. It's about an atmosphere that swell culture and swallows real estate. It's about a dream that is as illogical as soft watches and as seductive as the promise of immortality. Plexus is dedicated to the preposition that all cities are not created equal, only the people who inhabit them. It is further committed to the proposition that the people of cities are creative survivalists who refuse and acknowledge the laws of nature and who glory in adversity. There is, in the collective heart of the people of the cities, a wild, unremitting thirst for the impossible contradictions that make them simultaneous victims and victors.

Plexus believes that the creative involvement of the individual can do more to enhance a responsive environment than all the bureaucratic machinations of an infinity of public agencies.

The Plexus opening was a party presenting many performances dedicated to the modern gods of the modern cities.

In the end of 1982, Richard Flood left the group. I contacted two club organizers, John Hanti and Louis Tropea, who joined us in the renovation of the loft. On December 31, 1982, the space as a club was open to the public on the occasion of a big new year eve party, The Garden of Fuzz. Complaints from the neighbourhood stopped club activities.

Figure 14

Plexus Performance Space



New York, 1983, Photo by L. Kanter

At the beginning of February 1983, under the new name of Plexus International Center For Urban Resources, a non profit organization, we reopened as a performance space. The preview opening was made by a dance performance Hair by Marika, an Estonian artist. Historically, Plexus performance space started its activities on April 19 of 1983, with the world premiere of Turtle Dreams, an art performance by Meredith Monk, a well known artist.

In June of 1983, Roberto Brambilla and Gianni Longo left Plexus as partners. They decided to charge a high rent for the space. I decided to continue alone and I became the legal representative of Plexus non profit organization.

In the summer and in the fall of 1983, Plexus presented and produced an intense art program.

In March of 1984 Plexus was forced to stop its activities as the space was given away for a real estate operation, and I lost all my economic investment and personal credibility.

In April of 1984, with serious financial problems, I moved into a burned building, between Avenue A and B, on the Lower East Side of New York, at 523 East 6th Street. Brian Goodfellow, a visual artist,

introduced me to Mrs. Sarah Farley, a old friend of Billie Holliday and a charismatic leader of the homesteader community on the Lower East Side.

Together, with my friend Giuseppe Sacchi, a journalist, we decided to open a community cultural space, in the ruined basement of the burned building, where on the ground floor, Mrs. Farley managed a thrift shop with Melody D'Arnell. Mrs. Farley offered me the possibility of living in the ruined third floor, with no glass in the windows, no water, no electricity, and only a portion of the floor and the ceiling. The basement was totally full of garbage. With the help of Giuseppe Sacchi we cleaned the basement while at the same time I made more liveable the third floor. Karl Berger, a musician and director of the Creative Music Foundation in Woodstock, associated to the Zen Arts Center of United States, joined us. On June 13 of 1984, the Shuttle Theatre was opened as a community art space only for card members. It was under the umbrella of Plexus International Center for Urban Resources thus having a legal status. After its opening, Mikey Pinero, a poet very well known, gave me an Indian American chief statuette which was the house protector of the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, a Lower East Side community space, that he founded with Miguel Algarin and others. At that time it was closed. This statuette was placed at the entrance of the Shuttle Theatre and we used its image as cover logo of the necessary Plexus membership card to be admitted.

Figure 15

Mickey Pinero' Shuttle Theatre Recall



523 East 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Lower East Side, New York, 1984

The Shuttle Theatre started its activities with a program of jazz performances, coordinated by William Parker, a musician resident in the same street and leader of iSound Unity, a collective of community musicians. A program of poetry readings, coordinated by Miguel Algarin. A program of theatre performances was coordinated by Giuseppe Sacchi. We had in the beginning a program of art exhibitions, organized by Carlo McCornich and Steve Kaplan which was shifted into The Artist in the First Person, an art program with no curators, coordinated by myself directly with the artist.

On August 25 of 1984, In Order to Survive, a statement by William Parker, was performed in the middle of the street, in front The Shuttle Theatre. It was organized by Sound Unity, Plexus, Nuyorican Poets Cafe, L.A.N.D. (Local Action for Neighborhood Development), The Shuttle Theatre and other community organizations. It was an open call to draw attention to the condition of the starving status of the artist as well as of the child in the community.



Figure 16

In Order to Survive



523 East 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Lower East Side, New York, 1984, photo by M. Wheler

Miguel Algarin, Billy Bang, William Parker, Alfa Diallo, Karl Berger, Jeemeel Moondoc, Roy Campbell, David Street, Arleen Schloss, performed on the street while Bruce Richard Nugent together with Ms. Farley chaired the community event.

Bruce Richard Nugent was the last in life artist from FIRE!!, a historical black Renaissance magazine published in Harlem in 1926, and I met Bruce few days before through Mickey Pinero and Miguel Algarin. After this event, Don Cherry, a well known musician, who was performing at the Shuttle Theatre with Mikey Pinero, gave me a little Buddha metal statuette as his contribution for the development of a fund-raising community event.



Figure 17

Don Cherry's Buddha



On board Elisabeth boat, Carloforte, Sardinia, 1988, photo by the researcher.

In September of 1984 Bruce Nugent became the new chairperson of Plexus, Sarah Farley and Mickey Pinero vice chairpersons, and William Parker, Miguel Algarin, Billy Bang, Giuseppe Sacchi, Jeemeel Moondoc became members of Plexus board of directors. I acted as executive director and Arturo Lindsay as a consultant.

In the summer of 1984, one early morning, I was awakened up by an old friend of my father's, Prof. Raimondo Demuro, a Sardinian expert of Nuraghic oral traditions, who spoke only Italian and Sardinian. He had just arrived from Sardinia. He needed some assistance to find an American publisher for his Nuraghic tales. I introduced him to the writer Stephen DiLauro who made the English introduction for his work.

In the fall of 1984, Jeemeel Moondoc, Billy Bang, William Parker and myself established the Lower East Side Music Committee at the Shuttle Theatre and we organized several Lower East Side Music

Jazz Festivals. Butch Morris after the second one in December of 1984 joined the Committee with Will Power.

On January 16, 1985, Prof. Angiola Churchill, co-director of the International Center for Advanced Studies in Art at New York University, and chairperson of the Department of Art and Art Education of New York University, invited me to give the lecture The Artist in the First Person for her students of the course “Art & Ideas.” I briefly presented my work and then I introduced the following artists, with whom I had worked in the past: Ralston Farina, Paolo Buggiani, William Parker, Ken Hiratsuka, Peter Grass, Joan Waltermath, Willoughby Sharp, Luca Pizzorno, Arleen Schloss, Julius Klein, Leo Panar, James Mc Coy, Amir Bey, Liz and Val, Snoky Tate. In “the first person” we performed our own presentation. The result was an interactive participation with students and audience. The event closed with a feast provided by Gianni Villella, an Italian sociologist, who arrived with two plates of “Freselle” bread with fresh tomatoes, mozzarella and basil.

Few months later prof. Churchill invited me as graduate assistant to join the NYU Art and Art Education Department, as part of a Ph.D. program in art education.

In the Spring of 1985, during my visit to my brother Carlo, who is a fisherman living in the little island of Carloforte, in Sardinia, in Italy, I placed Don Cherry’s little Buddha statuette, together with In Order to Survive William Parker’s statement and with our group photo taken at the 6th Street event, into a small wood black box on board his boat Elisabeth. At that time I made a commitment that one day this Buddha would find its way back to the Lower East Side, within a world wide art event by artists in the first person from all over the world, in support of the survival of the struggle of artists in the community and in particular for the development of a fund-raising for a community-based art project. This little Buddha statuette, few years later, became the first relic on which “Plexus Black Box” developed as a community-based art travelling project.

In the spring of 1985, Nilda Cortez, executive director of C.U.A.N.D.O. (Culturas Unidas Aspireran Nuestro Destino Original), a community civic cultural center, located on Second Avenue, on the corner

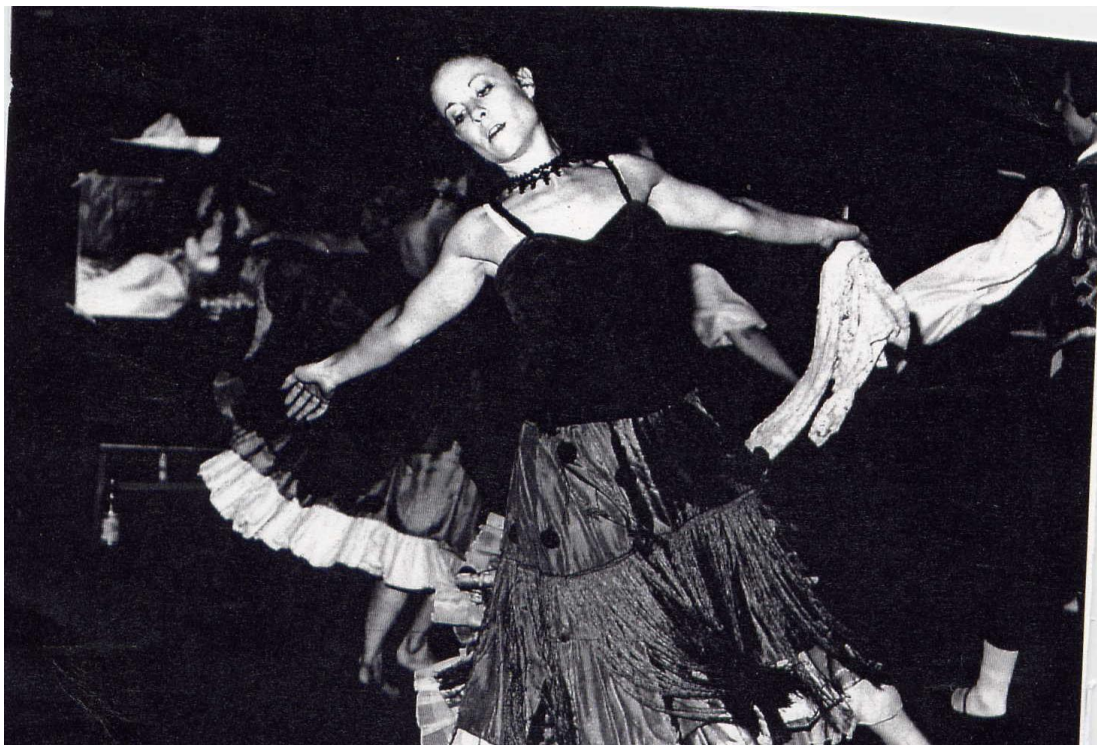
of Houston Street and corner with the Bowery, offered the facility for Plexus events to develop a community-based collaboration.

From May 15 to May 19, 1985 the Third Lower East Side Music Festival was held at the C.U.A.N.D.O. community cultural center.

On June 13, 1985, in C.U.A.N.D.O. Plexus presented its first “artopera” Goya Time, 1985, New York, this was a multi artforms event which I created in collaboration with Butch Morris and Gretta Sarfaty. This first “artopera”, in which participated more than 80 artists, among musicians, poets, singers, dancers, actors, visual artists, was focused on freely conducted interpretations of the same theme La Maja.

Figure 18

Goya Time, 1985, New York



Choreography by G. McLean, CUANDO, New York, 1985, photo by J. Day.

This theme brought attention to the question of who was the subject and who was the object, raising the issue of the limitation on the artists's freedom made by the stereotype models traditionally utilized in the art schools. Paolo Maltese, an expert of history, suggested, as a historical cat of the today art trend, to show slides with conomic diagrams of the dynamics of the trade of art in the market just as a commodity trend. The slides of the diagrams, by Cristobal Senior, an economist, were mixed with slides of famous "recline nudes" in the history of art, starting from La Maja, dressed and undressed. These slides were projected during the theatrical performance of the killing of artists Eve Vaterlaus, Baldo Diodato, Pedro Cano, Joe Lowis, Franco Ciarlo, Luca Pizzorno, among others, participating at the "atelier des arts" by the Spanish Royal Family, directed by Raja Fisher, while Eighth of May, the famous Goya's painting image was projected.

In June of 1985, a group of friends of Ralston Farina, a performer who participated in Plexus previous events and was involved with the concept of time as art as well as gravity, decided after Ralston's death, to have in the community a commemorative event for him. The group, made by Leonard Horowitz, Arleen Schloss, Willoughby Sharp, Albert DiMartino and myself, after several meeting at Willoughby Sharp studio, decided to organize at C.U.A.N.D.O. the first Purgatorio Show dedicated to Ralston.

On July 17 of 1985, In the Night of No Moon, Purgatorio Show '85, New York was performed by 350 artists as a large community art event, dedicated to Ralston, was produced by Was Inc. and presented by Plexus. The entire 5 floors building of C.U.A.N.D.O. was used, including a ruined basement with an old dry Olympic size swimming pool. It was presented as an open call for a future international community cultural house in New York. The community artists participation was coordinated by Ray Kelly, a sculptor and founder of the Rivington School; by Leonard Horowitz, first art critic of the Village Voice in the 60's; by David Boyle, a druid poet and community activist; by Willoughby Sharp, a media artist; by Arleen Schloss, a video art performer; and by myself together with Wess Power, an astrologer. 99 cents was the admission fee. We painted in yellow a large quantity of pennies as money

art to be given back as admission change against a dollar. 350 artists had simultaneous performances in the building.

Figure 19

Purgatorio Show 1985



“Learning Time” panel with M. Hardeman, B. R. Nuggent, Willoughby Sharp, L. Horowitz, A. DiMartino, S. Dernini, C.U.A.N.D.O., New York, 1985.

Figure 20

Purgatorio Show 1985



C.U.A.N.D.O. 9 Second Avenue, Lower East Side, New York, 1985,  
photo by. A. DiMartino.



At the end of November of 1985, my apartment with the entire building burned, and the Shuttle Theatre activities ended. I lost my living and working spaces, free of rent.

On February 27 of 1986, at C.U.A.N.D.O., as a continuation of the Purgatorio Show 1985, Plexus presented, Eve: Escape for Donna Purgatorio from 1986 Anno Domini by the Multinational Chain Gang of Downtown New York, an artopera with 220 artists. It was charged again 99 cents for the admission. This time pennies were painted in red and there was an admission ticket, with the figure of Donna Purgatorio, made by Silvio Betti, which had a hole with the size of the red penny to be inserted in as Plexus money art change. In the printed program was announced the escape of Plexus art slave ship from the New York Artworld control and the intention to land in the summer of 1987 in Sardinia, crossing the sea of mythology and art history. The storyline of Eve was inspired to the work of the artist Anita Steckel. It was about the escaping of Eve from the written history of art, on board a metaphoric art slave boat, crossing a fantastic mythological sea of the Nuraghic Sardinian culture, before to land between the two fingers of Adam and God in the Sistine Chapel. The metaphoric art slave boat was made, at the center of the gym, by the art installations of almost 100 artists, who were placed, one next to the other one, as the borders of the boat. All artists and installations were linked together by an endless wire, One Line, by Ken Hiratsuka, like art slaves being chained together and to their works of art. The captain of the boat was Ray Kelly. At the center of it was an orchestra conducted by the maestro Butch Morris. On the balcony the Plexus dramaturg Stephen DiLauro in the role of Lorenzo dei Medici, and Dave Street in the role of Uncle Sam were part of a theatre group, directed by Willem Brugman. They performed the forces of the Artworld buying the artists as slaves with penis dollars, Legal Gender, made by Anita Steckel. The artists were sold at auction by the auctioneer E.F. Higgins III, and thousands copies of the Haddamard Matrix by George Chaikin were given away to the audience, free of charge. Dancers as prehistoric animals moved around and the audience to get inside the gym was forced to pass through the Gates of Paradise by Eve Vaterlaus, controlled by a group of squatters, coordinated by David Boyle, with phallocratic weapons and dressed like ancient roman centurion, samurai and with other military costumes.

On the right side of the stage, Joe Strand built The House of Mephistophele, a huge installation with the shape of the Empire State Building. On the left side, there was TV God Fish Tank, an installation made by P. Michael Keane and the Indian Teepee made by Wes Power. All of the gym was full of smoke and of colorful theatrical lights, while also a slide projection show was showing art market diagrams from the past artopera Goya Time New York 1985. The slide show on different screens also was made by images of several artworks by Anita Steckel in which a woman was flying through art history in parallel with other Steckel's radical images of Adolph Hitler and Nazi soldiers walking with their penis out. On the stage Bruce Richard Nugent played the role of the Black Pope, sitting upon a throne in front of which four actors dressed as cardinals were eating a bread woman, performed by a Californian artist. On stage, a dancer together with a group of dancers performed the escape of the Black Eve from the World Trade Art Center. On board the art slave boat installation, Eve dressed only with a fig leaf was performed by Eve Vaterlaus. I performed a Nuraghic warrior who was attacking the Western culture and the Artworld. I had my half head shaved and the other part I left with long hair. I hold in my hand a green statuette of Nuraghic mythological warrior, with 4 eyes, 4 arms, and 2 antennas. I wore an iron mask sculpture The Minotaur, made by Paolo Buggiani, and I was covered by the white Italian line sheets by Patrizia Anichini Line, painted as works of art. Together with Barnaby Ruhe, an artist and world American boomerang champion, we played the role of the warriors of "Lady Liberty," performed by Kirsten Randolph, who was holding a torch in fire walking through the art slave ship installation. Following Lady Liberty, visiting all artists and moving on stage, I and Barnaby carried in fire a big iron sculpture on wheels, The Horse of Troy by Paolo Buggiani. On stage, we performed a mythological attack against the Artworld Trade Center. The breadwoman then raised from the table while Black Eve was raised up by the ballet and the Marlboro Man, performed by Leonard Horowitz, ended the event. The Plexus event was a compression of acts and people, in which so many artists from all art fields interacted within the whole environment by creating a new operatic art form that Leonard Horowitz named "Plexus Compressionism."

On March 1 of 1986, at Joannee Freedom's studio, a group of participants of the preview art opera Eve, David Boyle, Alfa Diallo, Garrick Beck and Joannee Freedom, Leonard Horowitz, Arturo Lindsay, Butch Morris, Lorenzo Pace, Maggie Reilly, and myself, gathered together to write a presentation of Plexus for the continuation of the art slave boat journey to be presented internationally in occasion of my next travelling to Dakar. We spent all night discussing about what was Plexus and how we could define it. Each one of us had her/his vision. Finally, after hours of non stop discussion, we arrived to the following statement:

To Whom It Concerns:

Plexus is a framework for global art projects.

These projects are simultaneous and syncratic presentations of science and art.

Plexus respects and encourages the creative process of research, actualization and documentation.

In essence, Plexus is an interdisciplinary multinational network for artists in the first person related together by art logic.

As a ritual art performance, in April of 1986, on board the Elisabeth, in Carloforte, in Sardinia, I made my first art altar installation, using the Don Cherry's Buddha statuette, the Nuraghic statuette from Eve, and other relics and records.

Since then I also started to use as my own ritual performance altar, a beautiful rock, near the lighthouse of Carloforte, to perform a series of "dematerialized" Nuraghic ritual art journeys in direction of Goree. The oral tales of the Nuraghic people, reported by Prof. Raimondo Demuro in I Racconti della Nuraghelogia, describes the Nuraghics able to travel from one place to another one, through collective ritual performances. Through these rites was possible to have the energy of a selected person travelling through time and space.

In May of 1986, with my green bronze Nuraghic statuette, I arrived in Dakar with Gianni Villella who had in Senegal a friend, Mangone Ndiaye. From Dakar we moved to Casamance, where after many discussions with them, in order to continue in 1987 the voyage of the art slave boat escaped from New York Artworld control, going in Sardinia before to land in the House of the Slaves in Goree Island, Dakar, I wrote with their inputs the first presentation of Plexus global project.



On May 15, at the African Cultural Center Malick Sy, in Dakar, Plexus project was presented to the art community under the title From Purgatorio to Paradise: The Mataphor as Travelling Factory. Two artists, Kre M'Baye and Langouste M'Bow, friends of Mangone, joined Plexus and participated in making an art installation with Plexus records, their artworks, and local relics.

On September 1 of 1986, at Cooperativa Centro Storico in Cagliari, together with Gaetano Brundu and Cicci Borghi, two old friends and members of Spazio A, we presented Fire!! Il Serpente di Pietra, An Universal Mythological Art Journey, which led to prepare the arrival in 1987 in Sardinia of the Plexus art slave journey. Plexus project was presented as a recall of the first art slave market show that I coorganized in 1979, in Rome, at Il Cielo, a performance alternative space, sponsored by the L.I.A.C.A. against the tentative of the police to close all Italian cultural alternative performance spaces. I was part of L.I.A.C.A. as member of Spazio A. which was the first performance space opened in Cagliari, in 1976, by myself together with a group of friends. There I met Gaetano Brundu, Cicci Borghi, and Giancarlo Schiaffini. The L.I.A.C.A., as well as Spazio A in Sardinia, had an important and not yet documented role in the defence of the freedom of cultural experimental research in Italy in the 70's, within the particular political and cultural context of that historical period when in Italy the police tried to close all performance and alternative cultural spaces as underground sites of revolt and protest against the regime's power. One of the main places where L.I.A.C.A. used to meet was my house in Rome at Piazza San Giovanni della Malva.

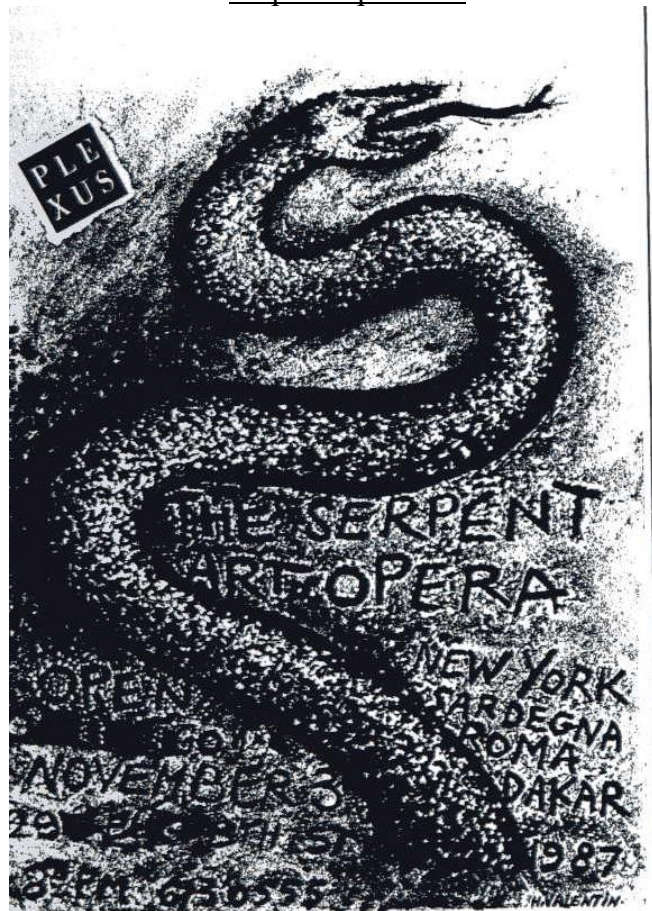
On September 4 of 1986, in Rome, in collaboration with Armando Soldaini, a former member of L.I.A.C.A., Plexus proposal was presented at Magazzini Generali.

In October of 1986, in New York, at Frank Shifreen's studio, together with Mitch Ross, Leonard Horowitz, Helen Valentin, Arturo Lindsay, David Boyle, Frank Shifreen, we started to have a series of meeting of Plexus, which was conceived as a multinational interdisciplinary recall network. In order to organize the 1987 Sardinian event we prepare the Serpent Open Call which was on October 26 presented at Fusion Arts, in New York. The Serpent Open Call, designed by Helen Valentin, was presented for the first time at the end of my phenomenological performance Eating Art: A Refracted

Self-Portrait in order to promote in New York the recall of the continuation of the art slave boat journey through the development of Il Serpente di Pietra, the upcoming Plexus event planned for the summer of 1987 in Sardinia, as like it was announced in 1986 at Eve artopera.

Figure 21

Serpent Open Call



Artwork by H. Valentin

I performed the Serpent Open Call as the closing act of Eating Art: A Refracted Self-Portrait which I conceived as part of my final paper for the NYU course “Phenomenology and the Arts,” conducted by Prof. David W. Ecker, which I was following as my first Ph.D. course in art education at New York University. My performance consisted in having 23 artists, eating a mozzarella piece hand made by an Italian living traditional master Mr. Di Paulo in Little Italy, and then expressing their individual taste,

one after the other one. After all together in the final act we danced, drinking some wine from a common bottle, in a collective serpentine movement.

In December of 1986, in Cagliari, Gaetano Brundu introduced myself and Willem Brugman to Prof. Franco Meloni, a physicist at the University of Cagliari, and to his wife Anna Saba, an artist. They joint Plexus in the development of the organization in Sardinia of the upcoming Il Serpente di Pietra event.

In January of 1987, in New York, at Fusion Arts, Plexus Passport for Purgatorio, a prototype of a retrospective book on Plexus Purgatorio Show was presented. During the same time, Willem Brugman in Amsterdam presented the opening of Plexus Station.

On February 13, 1987, in Cagliari, at Studio Dessi, Gaetano Brundu, Franco Meloni, Cicci Borghi, Anna Saba, Randi Hansen, Luigi Mazzarelli, Andrea Portas, Antonello Dessi and others organized the art exhibition Bring Your Serpent.

On February 18, 1987, at Patrizia Anichini Gallery, in New York, I performed Do you think it possible to eat Andy Warhol if you eat a Campbell Soup can? . It was my second phenomenological performance. I made it in order to write the conclusion of my pending paper for Prof. Ecker's course "Phenomenology and the Arts." The Dematerialization of Art, an upcoming international symposium, organized by Angiola Churchill and Jorge Glusberg, co-directors of ICASA, inspired my "eating art" performance phenomenological inquiry. Lynne Kanter, Willoughby Sharp, Helen Valentin, Franco Ciarlo, Patrizia Anichini, Donald Sherman, Bernd Naber, Peter Grass, myself and others, participated by eating a Campbell soup can and by answering to a written test made by phenomenological philosophical questions, which I learned from my previous experiences in Ecker's NYU course. All around the kitchen and on the table, where the Campbell soup cans were eaten, I ritually displaced Andy Warhol's images. I placed as napkins near the plates the brochures of the ICASA symposium, in order to be read. At the end, statistically, the questionnaires reported that the majority of us believed that we ate Andy Warhol during our performance. Few days after Lynne Kanter told me that that night Andy Warhol died. We felt very shocked about.

During The Dematerialization of Art forum, it was posed the question to Nam Jun Paik, one of the panelists, if it was possible for him to think that we ate Andy Warhol. Paik confirmed that he believed that we “dematerialized” Warhol in our intentional act of eating his commodity art symbol.

On June 29 of 1987, in Rome, with a serpentine parade procession performance, starting from my house in Piazza San Giovanni della Malva and from the near Teatro in Trastevere, Plexus performed with the participation of more than 50 artists in the streets of Trastevere a recall tour of the sites related to the historical first L.I.A.C.A. art slave market performance made in 1979.

On June 30, at the Teatro in Trastevere, a group of Plexus participants made by Gianni Villella, Carlo Cusatelli, Pino Licastro, Paolo Maltese, Willem Brugman, myself, Arturo Lindsay, Miguel Algarin, Maggie Reilly, Armando Soldaini, Giovanna Ducrot, Shalom Neuman, Dax Group, and others, presented to the press the program of Il Serpente di Pietra, the first international art slave marker show, presented as four days of art and science to be held the following week in Gavoi, in Sardinia, under the auspices of the Cultural Department of the Sardinian County. It was presented as the 4th Plexus artcoopera.

Figure 22

The Voyage of Il Serpente di Pietra



From Rome to Gavoi, Sardinia, 1987, photo by L. Squarcia.

From July 1 to July 4, in Gavoi, in Sardinia, 160 artists of 23 different nationalities as an answer to the call sent out in New York on February 27, 1986, worked and lived together in the megalithic sanctuary of Sa Itria, creating in a collaborative art environment the artcoopera Il Serpente di Pietra.

It was organized by Franco Meloni and Mariangela Sedda. In a ritualistic performance Lorenzo Pace played the shaman who was trying to awaken the spirit of art, Willem Brugman read Miguel Algarin's Body Bee Calling XXIst Century poem, and as a closing act, I burned my clothes with Assane M'Baye, the representative of Plexus Dakar artists, as the symbolic burning of my image of Plexus artistic director.

Figure 23

End of the Artistic Director in Plexus



A modern rite by S. Dernini, A. M'Baye, A. Lindsay, M. Reilly, Il Serpente di Pietra, Sa Itria, Gavoi, Sardinia, 1987, photo by S. Grassi.

We performed the art ceremony while an old masquerade Sardinian sheep man was ritually dancing, holding my green nuraghic statuette from the 1986 New York art opera, and Arturo Lindsay, as the ancestral messenger, was watching a burning art box made by him and containing all signatures of the participants. Franco Meloni and Bruce Breland in Pittsburgh coordinated art exchanges of freedom, through Bitnet computer network connecting many sites in the world, Kassel, Sidney, Montreal, Wien, Wales, New York.



Figure 24

Il Serpente di Pietra



Plexus Artcoopera 4th, Gavoi, Sardinia, 1987, photo by A. Lindsay.

In July of 1987, I went with Willem Brugman in Carloforte. I brought my green Nuraghic statuette on board of the Elisabeth and I placed it with other relics from Il Serpente di Pietra next to the Don Cherry's little Buddha statuette, together with other records and relics from past Plexus events. We performed a ritual departure in direction of Goree island. From this moment, the Elisabeth boat started to be identified as the Plexus permanent travelling storage for all relics and records produced during Plexus activities.

In the fall of 1987, thanks to the artworks by Gaetano Brundu, Antonello Dessi, Luigi Mazzarelli, Anna Saba, and others, offered in exchanged to the printer Franco Girina, an art collector, I was able to have published in Cagliari by Edizioni Celt the first printed booklet on Plexus, Passport for Plexus Serpent.

On December 23 of 1987, in Dakar, at the Auditorium INSEPS, organized by Assane M'Baye, with Youssouph Traore and Pathe Diop, I presented to the authorities of Dakar the Plexus project of the arrival of the art slave boat to the island of Goree, in the House of the Slaves.

On February 20 of 1988, in the dry swimming pool in the basement of C.U.A.N.D.O., I organized a report to the Community of the last Plexus developments from Rome, Sardinia, Amsterdam, and Dakar. This report was presented as the first performing act of The Redefinition of an Andy Warhol Campbell Soup Can. It was made as a commemoration of the first anniversary of our dematerialization of Andy Warhol. It was inspired to the ICASA symposium The Redefinition of Art in the Collision of Cultures in the Post-Modern World, held in the same period, in which I was graduate assistant.

Leonard Horowitz describes the event in his paper reported in Appendix E. On that occasion I made my first art altar installation on the diving board of the swimming pool where I placed the green Nuraghic statuette with a copy of the Pinero's American Indian Chief, with two boxes of Campbell Soup cans which I transformed into Plexus cans. A red penny was glued on top of each can and the Plexus name was printed on each one with a rubber stamp.




Figure 25

Plexus International Art Slavery Manifesto

THE RIVINGTON SCHOOL

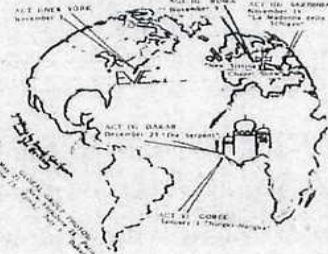
# OPEN CALL FOR PLEXUS INTERNATIONAL ART SLAVERY MANIFESTO GROUP SHOT



Frank Shifreen Graphics

Photo by Shifreen/Landis/Barber

**CALENDER 1988 "THE SERPENT" ART CO-OPERA #5 (5ACTIONS) ENDS AT PAN AFRICAN FESTIVAL OF ART & CULTURE, DAKAR**



**BRING YOUR SERPENT !!!**

On Saturday, May 21, 1988, at 4:00 p.m. from 6:00 a.m. May 22, 1988, Plexus International and Overwrought will orchestrate an historical and group photo shoot at the Rivington School's monumental sculpture landscape at 172 Forsythe Street (two short blocks south of Hester St, Northeast corner, the guest of the Pan African Festival at Art 5 Culture, Plexus is preparing an Art Co-opera No. 5, The Serpent, in the tradition of the Plexus past co-opera which in New York alone have included: Fugitive, Snow, 1982, Above a Free New York 1983, Eve 1986, and Lower East Side Jazz Festival.

All Artists in the First Person are invited to come together at independent producers of "The Serpent", the Second International Art Slavery Market in Modern History. A multi-racial, multi-cultural photo will result, featuring prominent figures of the international art community from New York, Amsterdam, Paris, Rome, Sardinia, and Dakar, who will be shot at public spaces as image/subjects for the Plexus International Shooting Art Slavery Manifesto for Art Freedom.

**SATURDAY MAY 21, 1988, 6 A.M.  
(raindate may 22 6 P.M.)  
172 FORSYTHE STREET**

Rivington School, New York, May 21, 1988, Graphic by Frank Shifreen.

Figure 26

Group Shot Against Art Slavery, New York.



Photo by I. Dalla Tana, Rivington School, New York, May 1988.

Figure 27

Metateatro Group Shot Against Art Slavery, Rome.



Photo by A. Mordenti, Metateatro, Rome, June 1988.

On May 21 of 1988, at Rivington School a group photo shot with a large number of historical Plexus participants was made by Ivan Dalla Tana and the first Plexus International Art Slavery Manifesto Group Shot was given out for free. Plexus Manifesto had printed on its back cover page many group photo shots from antecedent Plexus events made after the 1984 In Order to Survive community event. Rivington School was a radical art urban project, founded by Ray Kelly and inspired by Bucky Fuller, as a workshop of metal sculptors made in an empty ruined lot of the New York City.

On June 15 of 1988, at the Metateatro in Rome, a group of historical participants of the Italian performing avant-garde related to the L.I.A.C.A. time gathered together for group shot by Adriano Mordenti, in front of a large copy of the Ivan Dalla Tana's group photo taken in New York, next to the green Nuraghic statuette. Fabrizio Bertuccioli gave out for free his Manifesto Chiamata Aperta per gli Schiavi dell'Arte (Open Call Manifesto for the Slaves of Art). I opened two boxes of Campbell Soup cans. Ten lire coins were glued on top of each can and painted in white. All artists signed an individual can. This action was called "Made in the 80's for the 90's." In Carloforte, on board of Elisabeth, on June 18 of 1988, Luigi Mazzairelli, Stefano Grassi, Maria Grazia Medda, Anna Saba, Randi Hansen, Gabriella Locci, Antonello Dessi, Andrea Portas, Antonio Caboni, and others, dressed the Elisabeth as an art slave boat. A group photo with Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Armando Soldaini, Franco Meloni, and all Sardinian artists holding previous Plexus photo group shots in New York and Rome was taken by the researcher.



Figure 28

Group Shot Against Art Slavery, Sardinia



On board the Elisabeth, Carloforte, Sardinia, June 1988, photo by the researcher.

The green Nuraghic statuette was placed on a ritual art altar next to the Buddha statuette and next to a small toy boat which Gaetano Brundu had transformed in a work of art by painting his “baffo” (moustache) sign recalling the stereoform of the immunological messenger “interleukine two.” On June 20 of 1988, in Cagliari, at Gaetano Brundu’s studio, Bertuccioli, Gaetano and myself celebrated the departure of a little toy art boat that Gaetano had for a long time utilized to represent a messenger of art freedom for Plexus. It was made to allow Plexus to escape, as we stated, from many local art constrictions raised by the artists of Plexus in Cagliari. On the sail of this art toy boat, Brundu painted his moustache as a recall of the immunological messenger “interleukine two”. This image, the moustache was also used as a recall of the poster of the music festival that I organized with Giancarlo Schiaffini at Spazio A, dedicated to Giacinto Scelsi.

Few day later, in Cagliari, Luigi Mazzarelli gave me some of his art works exposed on board the Elisabeth. He offered as his contribution for Goree, two large art mail envelopes, with the measure of a meter by a half meter, with Plexus art mail stamps and rubber mail stamps. Inside, he had handwritten two messages, one addressed to the Senegal artists and the second one to me in which he raised many critical contemporary issues in contemporary art. The text of the open letter addressed to me is fully reported in the Appendix E. On June 25 of 1988, in Rome, in front the cross inside the Colosseum, a group pf Plexus participants took again a new photo group shot. There Micaela Serino distributed, free of charge, to the public a large amount of 1000 lire plexonian money while she was carrying with her daughter Silvietta a long Plexus Serpent Money art work.

On July 4 of 1988, in Rome, the first anniversary of Il Serpente di Pietra event was celebrated at Il Mago d'Oz, which was one of the historical site of L.I.A.C.A., visited during the 1987 recall procession through the streets of Trastevere. From my house in procession with Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Micaela Serino, Annetta Ducrot and Paola Muzzi, I carried an old family wood container full of Plexus and L.I.A.C.A. relics and records. Fabrizio Bertuccioli with the assistance of Roberto Federici painted on this container the word "Fatti negli 80's per i 90's" (Made in the 80's for the 90's). Massimo Sarchielli, an Italian actor who in 1981 was part of the New York University program "The Artist in the First Person," opened the box.

Figure 29

Made in the 80s for the 90s



Mago d'Oz, Rome, 1988, photo by the researcher.

Then I presented its ingredients, including Micaela Serino's Plexus money, some original L.I.A.C.A. 1976 stamps, and the first prototype of my upcoming Plexus "Campbell" Soup Can.

On July 17 of 1988, in the garden of Gianni Villella, in Rome, as a collective ritual art performance with the little toy boat and a new Nuraghic statuette, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Micaela Serino, Gianni Villella, Armando Soldaini, Loreto Papadia, Lello Albanese, Marco Fabiano, Massimo Sarchielli,

Daniele Comelli, Bionca Florelli, and myself, retrieved from the ground an art work statuette, an ancestral art messenger by Arturo Lindsay which he placed there in 1987 by before going to Gavoi. In August of 1988 I arrived in Dakar, and with Langouste M'Bow and Assane M'Baye, we went to the mosque of Touba to meet Serin Karim M'Backe, a religious chief, to inform him and his family of the arrival of Plexus project in Goree, with the sacra image of Prophet Cheik Amoudou Bamba. On August 26, Plexus through a serpentine procession parade of hundreds participants, performing the exile to Gabon of Cheik Amoudou Bamba, from the streets of La Medina to the island of Goree, arrived to the House of the Slaves in Goree. At the conclusion of the procession, I presented Plexus International Open Call Against Art Slavery Manifesto to the representative of the Mayor to promote the opening of a World Art Bank in Goree, against any kind of slavery. A large group photo shot, made inside the House of the Slaves on the stairs of "the door of no return," ended Plexus event.

Figure 30

From La Medina to Goree Island, Dakar



On the ferry boat going from Dakar to Goree Island, 1988, photo by the researcher



Figure 31

House of the Slaves Group Shot Against Art Slavery, Goree



House of the Slaves, Goree Island, Dakar, 1988

The video of this event was curated by Odita Okechukwu, a Nigerian artist and a scholar of contemporary African art at Ohio State University, whom I met at Kre M'Baye's studio a few days before the event.

From May to August of 1988, Plexus Open Call produced a series of photo groups, in which all together more than 3-400 artists, in New York, Rome, Dakar, Cagliari, gathered together in support of Plexus project to open in Goree Island a World Art Bank, produced by all artists of the world.

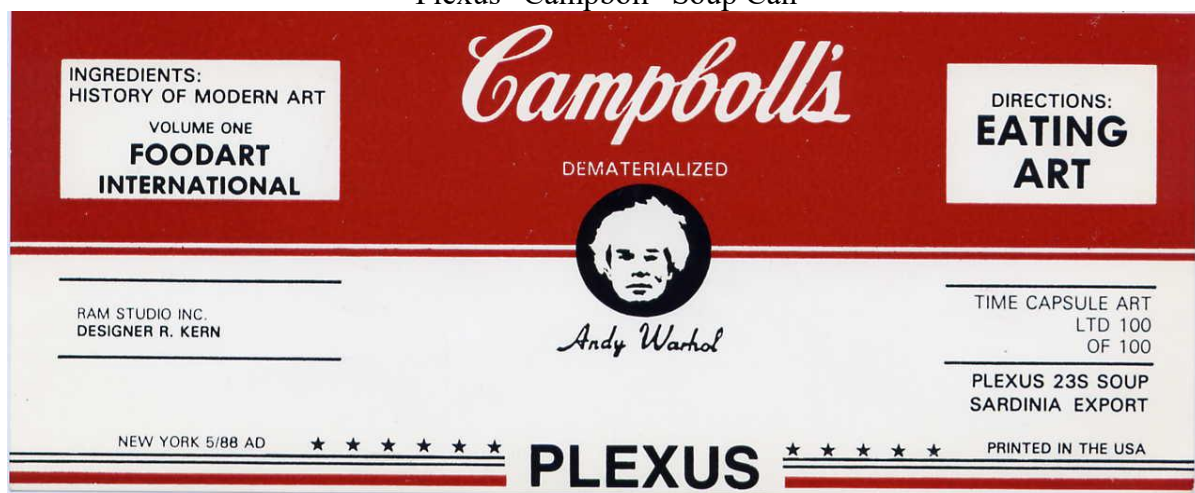
In September of 1988, I came back to Carloforte, where I brought back the little Buddha statuette on board the Elisabeth, and made new art altar installation on board and at my ritual rock near to the lighthouse. On September 23 of 1988, in the loft of Carmen Miraglia, in New York, I presented, in occasion of my birthday, an art altar made by records and relics, among others there were my nuraghic



statuette and the American Indian chief statuette, from my past voyages. This art altar served to present the first limited edition of labels of Plexus Campbell Soup Can. The idea of this Plexus artwork was conceived by me and, under my instruction, made by Robert Kern and Maggie Reilly for Ram Studio, in New York. It looks like a red and white Campbell Soup Can label, with the little fine difference, instead of Campbell, it is written with the same character “Campboll’s.” At the center, between the red and white stripes, there is a circular black frame within the white image of the head of Andy Warhol, on top of which, in the red stripe, it is written “Dematerialized,” and under of which, in the white one, it is reproduced the signature “Andy Warhol.” At the bottom, in the center, it is placed “PLEXUS.” On the top left side of the red stripe, there is a rectangular white frame in which is written “Ingredients: History of Modern Art, Volume One, FoodArt International.” On the same side, in the bottom of the white stripe, it is written “New York 5/88 AD.” In the middle there is the credit to “Ram Studio Inc. Designer R. Kern.” On the top right side of the red stripe, inside a symmetric white rectangular frame, it is written “Direction: Eating Art.” On the bottom, in the white stripe, it is reported “Printed in the USA,” and in the middle it is written “Time Capsule Art LTD 100 of 100” and then “Plexus 23S Soup Sardinia Export.”

Figure 32

Plexus “Campboll” Soup Can



Concept by Sandro Dernini, designed by R. Kern printed by Ram Studio, 1988, New York

At Carmen's loft, on the back of my art altar, I placed the boxing ring poster, used in the past group shot event at the Metateatro in Rome, at its center I placed the image of the House of the Slaves of Goree. At the bottom, I placed a red and white Campbell poster from the Whitney Museum show "Made in the Sixties," together with the poster of the Rivington School Open Call for Plexus International Art Slavery Manifesto.

In October of 1988, on the ground floor wall of the burned building of The Shuttle Theatre, I exposed a large selection of photos documenting the voyage of Plexus. It was an open report to the Community. I performed the ritual Plexus photo group shot with several community historical participants, among others, William Parker, Joannee Freedom, Brian Goodfellow, Lynne Kanter, Gary Beck.

On November 3 of 1988, Plexus at C.U.A.N.D.O. presented the first act of The Serpent as "Purgatorio Show 1988."

Figure 33

C.U.A.N.D.O. Purgatorio Shows '88: The Serpent

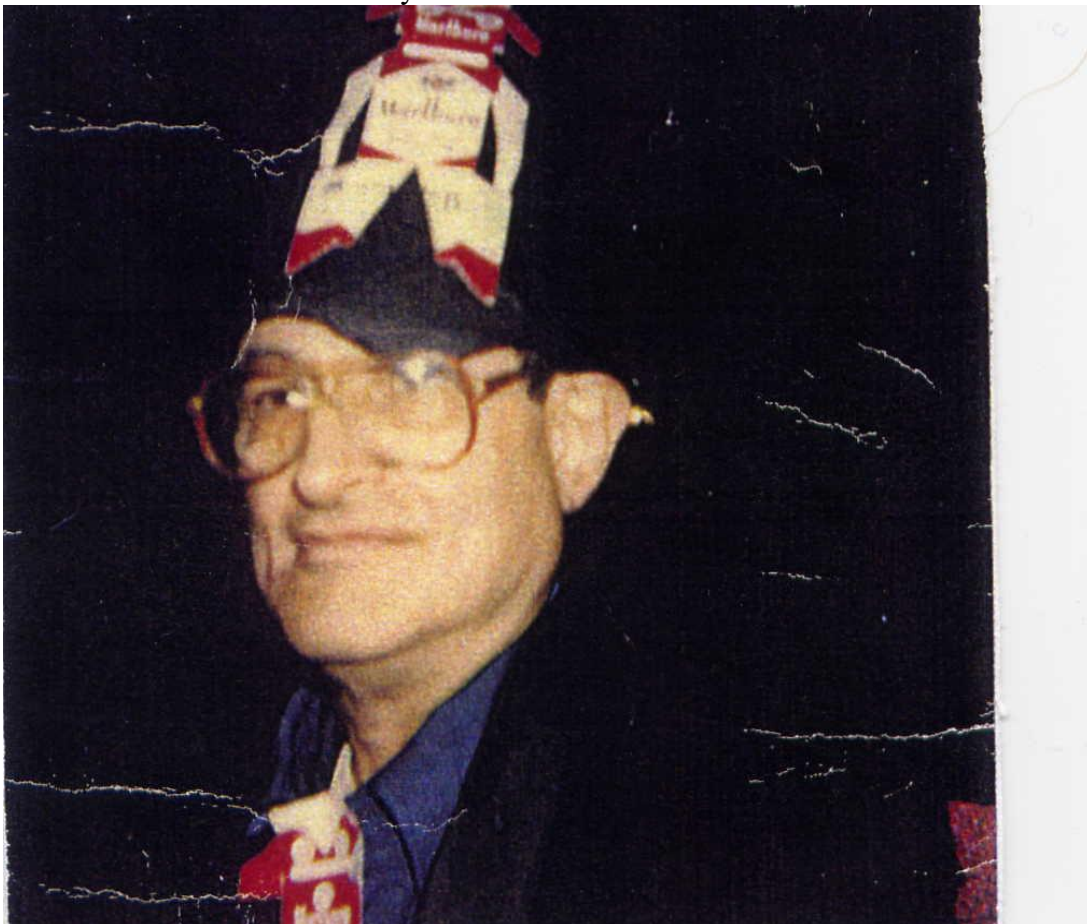


S. DiLauro, J. Rodriguez, S. Jackson, M. Reilly, C.U.A.N.D.O., 1988, New York, photo by the recherche

The Serpent was articulated in five acts in five different cities, New York, Carloforte, Cagliari, Dakar, Goree. At C.U.A.N.D.O. in the Purgatorio Show '88 performed, among others, Jose Rodriguez, Nilda Cortez, Wes Power, David Boyle and the Shock Theatre Group, Stephen DiLauro, Lynne Kanter, Arturo Lindsay, Lorenzo Pace, Miguel Algarin, Andrea Grassi, and myself. I produced a limited edition of Plexus Purgatorio Shows '88 black and white T-shirts, made by David Boyle and Joannee Freedom. The little art toy boat was used as a container of Plexus Serpent pins to be given away, free of charge, to the audience as made in the 80s for the 90s. At the end Lenny Horowitz performed the Marlboro Man.

Figure 34

Lenny Horowitz's Marlboro Man



Purgatorio Show '88, C.U.A.N.D.O., New York, 1988, photo by L. Kanter.

On November 11 of 1988, as second act of The Serpent, at the Snow Ben Room of Bobst Library of New York University, Plexus, presented Il Viaggio Del Serpente, an International interactive Italian evening of art, music, poetry and technology, in collaboration with the Department of Art and Art Professions and the Department of Music and Performing Art Professions of New York University, the Department of Physics of the University of Cagliari, the Dax Group of Carnegie Mellon University, and sponsored by the Italian Institute of Culture. In this event, artists in New York, in Cagliari, and in Pittsburgh, interacted via computer and fax. Plexus artists performed a serpentine ritual procession from the entrance of the dinner room, following an imaginary route which ended in front to a computer where George Chaikin was trying to exchange art images with Franco Meloni in Cagliari, while Miguel Algarin and Arturo Lindsay were speaking on the phone with him, and Dinu Ghezzo was orchestrating in the Snow Ben Room a music happening to interact by phone with Cagliari. At the same time, in a corner as part of a theatrical performance four actors were eating a formal dinner. Wearing an anti-gas, I performed by phone the presentation of the Serpent travelling program and I pointed out a software program "Columbus Business Plan" as a propositive direction for the continuation of the art slave ship journey in the direction of Goree. Ivan Dalla Tana exposed his Nuclear Serpent which he deconstructed on the back of three enlargements of the group shot made in August at the House of the Slaves in Goree. He artistically developed the negative of the group shot photo, creating a new artwork as his contribution to Goree project and to be carried in the following acts of The Serpent.

Figure 35

Il Viaggio del Serpente



Artwork by Ivan Dalla Tana

On November 14 of 1988, the third act of The Serpent was performed on board the Elisabeth, on the occasion of the celebrations of La Madonna dello Schiavo in Carloforte. It consisted of a photo performance on board, with the captain Carlo Dernini and his crew wearing Plexus Purgatorio Show '88 T-shirts and performing the departure of Elisabeth in the direction of Goree.

In December of 1988 I went to Rome and at Annetta Ducrot's I organized a series of dinner parties in via del Corallo, where I created an art altar environment with at the center Arturo Lindsay's recovered



statuette. I used to create these art dinners in order to spread out the last news on Plexus art slave journey, to make new photos of Plexus participants, in front to their antecedent photos, while they were appointing themselves in these pictures.

From December 17 to 23, the fourth act was performed in Cagliari, on the occasion of Chiamata Aperta Incontri Tra Artisti, Tradizione e Modernita, organized in a piazza by Antonio Caboni and Tommaso Meloni, as an invitation by Plexus International to travel on board the art boat from Purgatory to Paradise. It featured the departure of the little art toy boat, carrying symbolically a large lot of works of art by Sardinian artists in support of the Goree project. A computer station was placed in the piazza by Franco Meloni and Francesco Aymerich and it displayed works of art coming from the interactive event of New York University. Antonio Caboni in a ritual performance burned some of his works of art, carved the rest of them or cut up some other ones, to be given away in small parts after that he signed them individually as new individual art works. Few days later Andrea Portas painted on a side board of the little art toy boat, "Liberte de l' Art," and on the other side "Ningki-Nangka." On top of the sail was the logo of Africa Project Against Apartheid by Silvio Betti, next to two shaking hands, one black and the other one white, above it was a Nelson Mandela image against apartheid.

In the end of December of 1988, in my house in Rome, at Piazza San Giovanni della Malva, a group of participants gathered together to document my departure for Goree. In a ritual photos art performance, Annetta Ducrot held the 1988 group shot made at Metateatro; Faker AlKousi held a poster with written "Plexus Made in the 80's for the 90's " and the little wood statuette by Arturo Lindsay that he participated in recovering, in the past summer, from the Gianni Vilella's garden. Micaela Serino performed the departure of the little art toy boat traveling through her Plexus Money Portfolio which she had made to be carried to Goree with the other works of art as contribution to the opening of the Art Bank. I wore Lenny Horowitz's Marlboro Man hat, a Plexus Purgatorio Show 88 T-shirt, holding a Whitney Museum's poster of "Made in the Sixties."

Figure 36

Arrival of the Plexus Art Slave Boat in the House of the Slaves in Goree



House of the Slaves, Goree, Dakar, 1989, photo by the researcher.

On January 1 of 1989, as final act, in the House of the Slaves in Goree, Franco and Valeria Meloni, myself, Willem Brugman, Assane M'Baye, Langouste M'Bow, Youssouph Traore, Awa B'Maye, and others, delivered the first lot of artworks, collected in Cagliari. Assane M'Baye, coming from the rocks at the ocean side, where slaves used to be deported in the direction of the Americas, performed the arrival a little art toy boat to "the door of no return" of the House of the Slaves . On the rocks in front of the entrance of "the door without return," we made an art altar installation of the art works collected in support of the continuation of Plexus art project and for the opening in Goree of the World Art Bank. Before crossing the door, Awa M'Baye ritually burned incense in her family pot, placed at the bottom of the door, and surrounded by a group of nuraghic statuettes which were painted in blue by Antonello Dessi in Cagliari. I performed at the same time the presentation of all Plexus records, works of art and relics, including Arturo Lindsay's retrieved statuette. Afterwards Langouste M'Bow carried

these one by one inside the door. One by one all of us crossed it to come inside, where we presented our selves and what we had done to the curator of the House. After we left the House, we went to the ANAST Cumba Castel, an art studio - gallery of a friend of Micaela Serino and of Assane M'Baye, in the island, where we buried the statuette of Arturo. On top of it, on the ground as a sign it was placed the Trojan Horse, a wood sculpture made by Kre M'Baye, in which I hid a boomerang by Barnaby Ruhe.

On January 3 of 1989, in front the entrance of the House of the Slaves, Anna Piccioni performed together with Zulu M'Baye, president of A.N.A.P.S. (National Association of Plastiques Artists of Senegal) and Willem Brugman a ritual reading of the Plexus Open Letter to All Artists of the World, made in August of 1988 in Dakar, see the document in the appendix D.

On January 8 of 1989, I made with Langouste MiBow an art installation at Jo Accam's Agit Art Gallery in Dakar, focused on the economic-political art control by the artworld of the Western market.

I presented to the press and to the Minister Aliasse Ba, who was there non formally, Plexus project and I showed the artwork made by Ivan Dalla Tana for Goree. By performing my Plexus Campbell Soup Can with atop it a group of 100 Plexus money bills by Micaela Serino, I called for attention on the last art market reports, placed at the center of an art installation made by Langouste M'Dow, with the last bits on works of art made in New York at November 1988 Sotheby's auctions.



Figure 37

Plexus World Art Bank Presentation to the Minister Ba



Jo Accam's Agit Art Gallery, Dakar, 1989

I recalled the difficult life of Van Gogh when he was alive as an example of the historic struggle of all artists, and I underlined the controversial value of the 57 millions dollars paid for the Van Gogh's painting Iris. I recalled that about this controversial sale I heard some rumors (a non verified information) in the New York artworld, circulating in 1987, about a substantial, "under the table," "insider" participation of the same auction house in the Van Gogh's buying, that I was not able to verified and therefore I stated that it was only a gossip "noise." Within this historical and controversial context I reported the history of Plexus art slave boat journey escaping from the New York Artworld control to open a World Art Bank, in Goree, for the survival of all artists of the world. Goree for me was, is, and will be for ever, an universal symbol of human rights, which still recalls for all of us the human trade market. It should serve to call for attention that behind any work of art,

traded as a commodity, there is a human being, the artist, who needs the negotiation of a new art contract.

In the end of January of 1989, I discovered in the Bobst Library of New York University, in the book The Life of Christopher Columbus by his son Ferdinando, the controversial story of the “route correction” made by Columbus, in his early experiences as captain, on board his ship in front of the Island of San Pietro, off of Sardinia. San Pietro is the island where the Elisabeth, in the port of Carloforte, was waiting to depart in the direction of Goree. I presented in February to the Assistant Dean of the SEHNAP School, Dr. James Finkelstein, my proposal to develop a project in relation to the 1992 Columbus 500 year anniversary event. After his approval, I started to contact some potential participants. On March 10 of 1989, in the morning, the 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium was established in New York by a group of academic institutions, cultural associations, international organizations, and community associations, including Jose Rodriguez, David Ecker, George Chaikin, Mico Licastro, Earl S. Davis, Nilda Cortez, John Gilbert, Angiola Churchill, Bruce Breland, Arturo Lindsay, myself, and others. I was appointed coordinator. The 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium had the purpose to rethink about Columbus’ s landing in the Americas through voyages of cultural navigation in a new new world which was understood to be the living planet and its living traditions.

On March 10 of 1989, in the evening, Okechukwu Odita made a performance-report to the Community in the gym of C.U.A.N.D.O about what it was accomplished with the establishment of the Consortium and how the Community could participate in it. A ritual art performance ended the report to the Community. It was dedicated to Mickey Pinero, who died, and it was made in presence of his father by myself, Arturo Lindsay and Miguel Algarin. On April 7 of 1989, Okechukwu Odita made at Rivington School a second performance report to the Community from the Consortium, after the second Consortium's morning meeting at NYU. A Nuraghic statuette was buried in the ground and a poster “Plexus Art Collection Made in the 80s for the 90s” was marked with the logo of Rivington School in fire.

In May of 1989, after we had some conflicts, at the same time, internal to the Consortium about how to proceed in relationship to the institutional participation, and internal to Plexus raised by Arturo Lindsay about our participation in the Columbus celebrations, it was decided to stop Plexus activities.

After it, I decided to move back in Rome and to open there the coordination office of the Consortium.

On May 25 of 1989, George Chaikin, Stephen DiLauro and myself, at the Institute of Computer Art of the School of Visual Arts, organized the event 1992: The Departure of An Art Human Shuttle For Freedom Journeying to the Realm of a New Planet Called Time -Art, featuring, among others, David Boyle and The Shock Troupe Theatre Group, Lenny Horowitz, Wess Power. George with a scanner camera “dematerialized” a canoe art work from Senegal which he tried to transfer on-line to Franco Meloni at the University of Cagliari, with no success. After this event I and George, before my departure, went in Princeton in front the house of Albert Einstein. There George’s wife Katy took a photo of us holding photos from the past event at the Institute of Computer Art, from the 1988 Rivington School group shot, and a rolled copy of the blueprint drawing of the optical device designed by George on the structure of the Haddamard Matrix.

On June 26 of 1989, I delivered to Franco Meloni, at the Department of Physics of the University of Cagliari, the computer disk with the “dematerialized” canoe, as part of an improvised performance by Tanya Gerstle, David Boyle, Willem Brugman, Stephen DiLauro, Sara Jacson, Antonio Caboni, holding the antecedent photos of the New York departure from the Institute of Computer Art.

Figure 38

The Departure of “Plexus Black Box”



S. Jackson, W. Brugman, D. Boyle, S. DiLauro, A. Caboni, F. Meloni,  
S. Dernini, University of Cagliari, June 1989.

In order to avoid an historical collapse of Plexus, after several discussions in Rome, in Cagliari and in Carloforte, made by David Boyle, Maria Pia Marsala, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Paolo Maltese, Willem Brugman, Franco Meloni, myself, Stephen DiLauro, Sara Jackson, Gaetano Brundu and Franco Meloni, how to solve the internal problems exploded with the participation of Plexus in the Columbus 1992 Consortium and event, it was decided to “freeze” Plexus into a “black box,” for a period of time. The time had to be determined later after a larger consensus was again gained and a strategy was defined for the survival and the historical advancement of Plexus International.

On July 1-2 of 1989, “Plexus Black Box” was presented within 1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte, an artopera performed at the Metateatro, in Rome, by David Boyle, Willem Brugman, Stephen DiLauro, Sara Jackson, Tanya Gerstle, myself, Antonio Caboni, Giancarlo Schiaffini, Fabrizio

Bertuccioli, Maria Pia Marsala, Micaela Serino, and Annetta Ducrot. Historically, this was the Plexus event in which for the first time the name of “Plexus Black Box” was presented and an artifact with this name was performed. The storyline of this artopera was made of the continuation of our art self-referential journey following the Haddamard Matrix blueprint of George Chaikin as a coordinate for our "self-discovery" circular journey in the planet of art. The music by Schiaffini, following the circular structure of Chaikin’s retina guides us to open and to cross the art installation made by Fabrizio Bertuccioli as the door of our heart. Maria Pia Marsala as Black Princess and Tanya Gerstle as White Goddess danced and played with the Earth globe, assisted Columbus, performed by Willem Brugman, in his long negotiation before with Queen Isabella and King Ferdinando, made by Sara Jackson and Stephen DiLauro. Columbus went to buy from the druid, David Boyle, in order to gain an old Iceland map, rolled and bounded with a Plexus Campbell Soup Can's label: "La Mappa Bona (The Good Map). At the end as in a magic tale, Brugman's Columbus turned into a mythological unicorn. I walked on the stage, carrying the box of “Fatti negli Ottanta per i 90s” (Made in the 80s for the 90s) and after to have exhibited one by one all relics and records contained inside of “ Plexus Black Box” I invited the audience to join Plexus Open Call against Art Slavery and to sign the boxing ring for freedom and to walk through the door installation of Fabrizio Bertuccioli: “Open the door of your heart to go into the future.”

Figure 39

Plexus Black Box



Door installation by Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Metateatro, Rome, 1989

On July 4 of 1989, Franco Meloni issued an open call to bring ideas as contributions for a general discussion on an actual definition of what PLEXUS has been, what it should be, and what it could be, to be analyzed by an international board of referees, at the University of Cagliari and coordinated by Frans Evers in Amsterdam.

On January 3 of 1990, Prof. Carlo De Marco, Dean, at that time, of the School of Medicine of University of Rome “La Sapienza,” Prof. David Ecker, New York University and ISALTA (International Society for the Advancement of Living Traditions in Art), and myself as coordinator of 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium, met at Prof. De Marco’s office to discuss a proposal a collaboration. Prof. Carlo De Marco was my former professor with whom I worked as biochemist in

the 70s. Together we conceived that “well being” theme could be the proper one for the continuation of the cultural navigation voyage proposed by the Consortium. It was conceived as a proposal to organize a diversity of cultural projects addressing the Academy and the Community on the issue of the well-being in the XXIst Century. After with David Ecker we met in Sardinia the Mayor of Carloforte, and Franco Meloni at the University of Cagliari. We also present ISALTA mission to Ubaldo Badas, the director of the Museum of Villanovaforru.

On January 15, Ecker, coming back in New York, developed the proposal of “The Voyage of the Elisabeth,” as a collaborative art performance. From that moment PLEXUS joined a continuous collaboration with David W. Ecker and with the non profit organization ISALTA (International Society for the Advancement of Living Traditions in Art) in which he served as executive director. This collaboration was about to promote “The Voyage of Elisabeth” as an Open Call for the establishment of an International Art Fund on the island of Goree-Dakar, next to the House of the Slaves, in order to survive the Masters of the Living Traditions in Art of all cultures in the living planet.

In February of 1990, at the Metateatro in Rome, in a party organized by Loreto Papadia, “Plexus Equipaggio Telematico “ was presented by Comitato Telematico Artistico Italiano, made by Glauco Benigni, Enzo Ciarravano, Francesco Franci, Ciro Ciriaco, Sandro Dernini, Giancarlo Schiaffini, Stelio Fiorenza, Loreto Papadia, Salerno, Angelo Vittorioso, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Pino Licastro, Pippo Di Marca, Maria Pia Marsala, among others, as a collaborative journey in direction of the 1992 Columbus Consortium event. As a follow up of it, at the Calcata Carnival, Maria Pia Marsala, myself, Micaela Serino, Loreto Papadia, performed the departure of the artbox “Fatti negli Ottanta per il 92” (Made in the eighties for the 92.)



Figure 40

Plexus Black Box Carnival



M.P. Marsala, S. Dernini, M. Serino, L. Papadia, Calcata, 1990.

In May and in June, Willem Brugman and Frans Evers performed in Amsterdam the deconstruction of “Plexus Black Box.”

Figure 41

Plexus Black Box



Amsterdam, 1990, photo by R. Jansen



With the Amsterdam 's records, I performed in my house in Rome with Maria Pia Marsala my “dematerialization” into the artbox Fatti negli Ottanta per il 92 to travel to Sardinia, where at Gaetano Brundu's studio I performed the arrival of a radioactive little toy boat as a Plexus art messenger, carrying the last news of “Plexus Black Box” This little toy boat was the exact copy of the first Gaetano Brundu's toy boat that I brought in 1988 in Goree. I found this copy in a tabac store in Carloforte. At Brundu's we performed with Andrea Portas and Daniela Fantini the departure of a large artwork, Il Sudario, that Brundu made as the sail of the Elisabeth. At the Archeological Villanovaforru Museum, with Ubaldo Badas, I performed “Plexus Black Box” arrival and the discovery of Nuraghic archeological contemporary art fragments of Plexus history.

On June 30 of 1990, 1992 Cristoforo Colombo, Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte, part III: Plexus Black Box was performed at the Ridotto del Colosseo, in Rome, featuring, among others, David Ecker, Arturo Lindsay, Maria Pia Marsala, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Roberto Federici, Giancarlo Schiaffini, Paolo Damiani, Odita Okechukwu, Ciriaco Ciriaco, Piero Cianflone, Carlo Cusatelli, Vittorio Terracina, Fabi, Anna Piccioni, Mauro Brusà, Elsa Rizzi, Victor Ibanez, Willem Brugman, Frans Evers, Antonio Caboni, Antonello Dessi, Andrea Portas, Lynne Kanter, Frank Shifreen, Loreto Papadia. It served to collect a second lot of works of art in direction of Goree.

On July 1 of 1990, myself, David Ecker and Odita Okechukwu presented to Mons. Dante Balboni, a Vatican art sacred, the Christopher Columbus Consortium project and Plexus art efforts bridging the House of the Slaves in Goree with the church of La Madonna degli Schiavi in Carloforte.

On July 2 of 1990 Arturo Lindsay, David Ecker, Odita Okechukwu and myself, met the Ambassador of Senegal in Italy, S.E. Youssouph Baro, to present Plexus and ISALTA activities and what was accomplished in the collection of new art works in relation to the Goree project.

On the evening of July 2 of 1990 at the Metateatro I coordinated the round table Plexus Black Box: A Multicultural Data Bank for “la Caravella dell'Arte” with the participation of Arturo Lindsay, David Ecker, Odita Okechukwu, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Frans Evers, Ciriaco Ciriaco, Frank Shifreen.

On July 4 of 1990, David Ecker, Odita Okechukwu, and myself, as coordinators of the Consortium, presented to the Municipality of Carloforte the proposal to organize in 1992 the Well Being Columbus Forum. On board Elisabeth we presented “Elisabeth, La Caravella dell’Arte,” a proposal for a travelling art project, in collaboration with ISALTA-Mediterranea, for the opening in Goree of a World Art Fund, in support of the masters of the living traditions in art of all cultures, under the risk of extinction.

Figure 42

The Voyage of the Elisabeth



Elisabeth boat, San Pietro Island, Sardinia, 1990

On July 5 of 1990, at the Archeological Museum of Villanovaforru, near Cagliari, David Ecker, myself, and Franco Meloni, we presented “Plexus Black Box” as a proposal for a data bank project to catalogue and retrieve information regard the masters of Sardinian living traditions in art.

On December 29 of 1990, as a closing performing act of my original time frame of my dissertation on “Plexus Black Box,” which limited my inquiry until 1990, I performed, at Teatro in Trastevere, in

Rome, with Giancarlo Schiaffini, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Maria Pia Marsala, Stelio Fiorenza, Micaela Serino, and others, a presentation of iPlexus Black Boxî to Mons. Dante Balboni, an Vatican art scholar.

Figure 43

The Delivery of “Plexus Black Box”



Teatro in Trastevere, Rome, 1990, photo G. De Marco.

On July 4 of 1991, on board the Elisabeth, in the port of Carloforte, the scientific committee of the Christopher Columbus Consortium, chaired by Prof. Vincenzo Cappelletti, Vice President of the Institute of Italian Encyclopedia "Treccani," together with Prof. Giovanni Lilliu, member of the Italian national academy of Lincei, Prof. Carlo De Marco, Dean of the school of Medicine of the University of Rome "La Sapienza, Prof. Saverio Aveduto, president of the International Institute of Epistemology, " La Magna Grecia, and chairman of the organizing Committee, my self as scientific coordinator of the Committee, together with Serafino Damico, Mayor of Carloforte, we celebrate the will of the Municipality to proceed in the direction of the organization in the October of 1992 of the Well Being Columbus Reconciliation Forum.

Figure 44

Plexus Presentation to the 1992 CCC



On board the Elisabeth, Carloforte, 1991.

With an interactive collaborative performance of Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Maria Pia Marsala, Nadia Campanini, Stelio Fiorenza, myself, Franco Meloni and Anna Saba, a fleet of art projects was presented to the Committee. At the end of our performance-presentation we placed the fleets documents into a small wood black box within a floating sculpture by Ciro Ciriaco, an Italian artist, representing “Plexus Black Box.”



Figure 45

Plexus Black Box



Artwork by C. Ciriaco, Carloforte, 1991.

At the same time it was performed the departure of the little toy boat Colombina, transformed into a work of art by Silvio Betti to be used as a messenger of reconciliation for the well-being of humankind. Betti placed on Colombina's bottom a small copy of the blueprint of the retina device made by George Chaikin. Colombina was carried into the sky by a colorful kite by Guido Pegna, an Italian scientist and artist.

On the fall of 1991, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, myself, Ciriaco, Piero Cianflone, and Carlo Dernini, the captain of the Elisabeth, recovered from the sea the floating sculpture. The small box representing "Plexus Black Box" was placed on board Elisabeth with the rest of the relics already on board.

On November of 1991 Gaetano Brundu opened in Cagliari, Plexus International Storage with an installation of Plexus relics brought by us from the Elisabeth's collection. During the Spring and Summer of 1992, Plexus International Storage had an intense activity of shows.

Figure 46

Plexus International Storage



Artwork by G. Brundu , Cagliari, 1992

On October 9 - 11 of 1992, in Carloforte, I coordinated for the Christopher Columbus Consortium Scientific Committee the international Columbus Reconciliation Forum on the theme of The Well Being in the XXI Century. During the session "Strategies for Health for All," Jose Rodriguez raised the attention on the need for a new synthesis of different cultural values within a new "well being" paradigm. David W. Ecker expressed his concern about the world survival of the living traditions in art. Franco Meloni and Lorenzo Pace addressed to Mockar MBow, chairperson of the Goree Almandies Memorial Foundation in Senegal, the Plexus proposal to open an Art World Bank in GorÈe, as a cooperative project of reconciliation. George Chaikin presented a networking cultural navigation proposal. Giancarlo Schiaffini performed Cambio di Rotta: The Voyage of the Elisabeth. Gabriella Locci installed her serpents on the wall, and Maria Grazia Medda exposed several Plexus Black Boxes. Lorenzo Pace carried Colombina who had ritually retrieved from the old Sardinian aristocratic family Amat di San Filippo.

Figure 47

Colombina



L. Pace with Colombina, Cagliari, 1992 photo by G. Stonefish.

At the end of the forum it was issued "The Columbus Open Call of Carloforte for Reconciliation," see document in Appendix D.

On October 12 of 1992 at Plexus International Storage, Lorenzo Pace, and Patricia Parker played the continuation of Plexus art journey, by dancing, singing, while George Chaikin and I were carrying George's optical device drawing around the space and looking through it.

On December 10 of 1992, Human Rights Day, on the morning, at the City Hall of New York, Dennis de Leon, Commissioner of Human Rights organized a round table with a group of American participants at the Columbus Reconciliation Forum. He invited Mico Licatro, David Ecker, George Chaikin, Jose Rodriguez, myself, Ralph Lerner, Earl S. Davis, and Okechukwu Odita, to discuss on the issue well-being raised in Sardinia. After, in the evening Plexus organized in the auditorium of the Barney Building of New York University a performance report to the community of the last developments from the Christopher Columbus Consortium efforts. This event, The Deconstruction of "The Voyage of the Elisabeth," The Serpent, in Order to Survive, presented as a session of the aesthetic

inquiry course by David Ecker, was performed among others by William Parker, Patricia Nicholson Parker, Lorenzo Pace, Alfa Diallo, Jose Rodriguez, myself, George Chaikin, Barnaby Ruhe, Okechukwu Odita, and Nilda Cortez.

The Mayor of the City of New York, after been informed by the Commissioner de Leon and by Mico Licastro about the process of reconciliation and well being turned on by the Columbus Reconciliation Forum held in Sardinia, acknowledged the Institute for Italian American Experience directed by Mico for its activity promoting goodwill, cooperation and human rights in the United States and therefore declared in New York City December 16th "International Reconciliation Day."

On April 26 of 1993, The International Reconciliation and Well Being Committee was established at the office of the commissioner on Human Rights of the City of New York, Hon. Dennis de Leon.

In the spring of 1993 I presented the project "The Voyage of the Elisabeth," as part of a community-based art education program, "Cultural Navigation and Community: Art, Reconciliation and Well-Being," organized by to the Graduate Summer Institute of Living Traditions in Art of New York University, in which I served as coordinator.

To move further the collaboration with New York University, the Dean Francesco Corongiu of the School of Sciences of the University of Cagliari together with prof. Franco Meloni, coordinator of the Interdepartmental Well Being Center, came in New York on the occasion of the first anniversary of the 1992 Columbus Reconciliation Event.

On October 12 of 1993, for Columbus Day, from St. John Divine Cathedral in New York, Plexus presented the art event, The 1993 Columbus-Marconi Open Call for the Well Being in the XXI Century, in support of the organization of the Second Well Being Reconciliation Forum.

On October 13, myself, Franco Meloni, Rolando Politi, Anna Saba, Antonello Dessi, Patricia Nicholson Parker, Annamaria Janin, Giovanna Caltagirone, Andrea Portas, David Boyle following in a ritual procession Jose Rodriguez carrying a copy of Mickey Pinero's American Indian chief statuette performed at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe the Repatriation of Art into the Community. On the stage Louis Griffith was waiting with the first copy of Mickey Pinero 's statuette. On stage we performed The



Repatriation of Art into the Community, as a wedding party between the two American Indian Statuettes.

Figure 48

The Repatriation of Art Into the Community

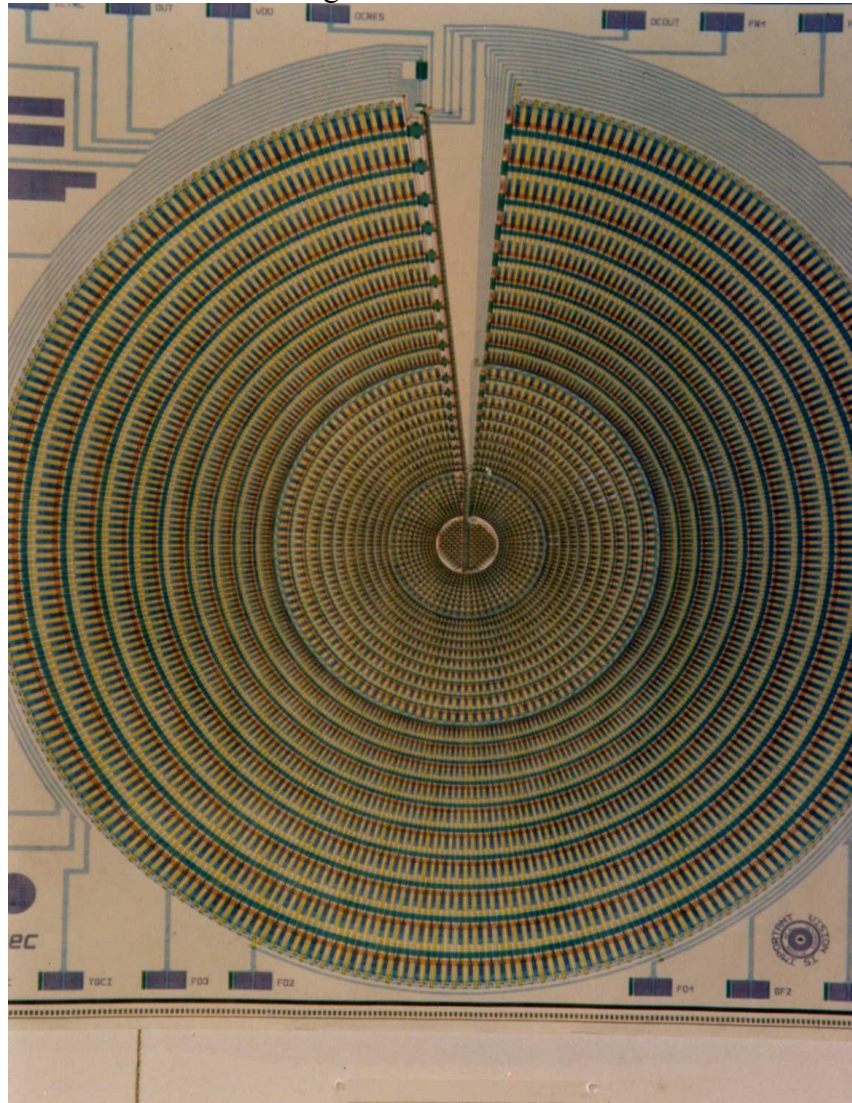


Nuyorican Poets Cafe, New York, 1993, photo by the researcher.

From November 3 to November 15 of 1993, at the Rosenberg Gallery of New York University, was held the Plexus art event, to which is delimited this inquiry. It was named A Contract to be Negotiated: Columbus Egg, The Living Plexus Black Box of “The Voyage of the Elisabeth.” This event took the form of a two weeks Atelier des Arts performance, curated by Frank Pio and myself. At the entrance of the Rosenberg Gallery, as a mandala, there was George Chaikin’s optical blueprint.

Figure 49

Looking at “Plexus Black Box”



Artwork by G. Chaikin

Under the George's blueprint, there was the item A1, reported at page 87. It was a photo made in Rome in my house in June of 1991, showing George and Giancarlo Schiaffini in front to the same retina's blueprint. George was holding Colombina and Giancarlo was holding audio and videocassettes from 1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte. They were holding a sheet of paper with two photos on. These two photos were made in January of 1990, again in my house in Rome, around my

kitchen table. In one there was myself, with a Nuraghic statuette in one hand, and holding with the other one a Plexus Campbell Soup Can with on top a little Buddha bronze statuette. I was seated next to David Ecker, who was holding a paper sign upon which was written “Cambio di Rotta,” (Route Correction); next to him there was Schiaffini, holding a color photocopy showing the Don Cherry’s Buddha statuette, on board the Elisabeth, near a plastic serpent next to a red coral tree and to a second little Buddha statuette. At the center of the table there was a Viking toy boat, a relic from the art opera 1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte, held in 1989. In the second photo, there was myself holding my wife’s cat Colombina and the color copy held before by Giancarlo. Next to me, there was Lynne Kanter holding an apple, and next to Lynne, there was Giancarlo holding the “Cambio di Rotta” sign. A copy of the poem The Box by Alfa Diallo was placed under the retina. On the right wall, near the entrance it was placed the Metateatro boxing ring image, performed in many past Plexus events since 1988, with at its center the photo made in 1990, at the Teatro in Trastevere in Rome, in occasion of the symbolic delivery of “Plexus Black Box” to Mons. Dante Balboni. All ll around there were many other Plexus records and relics. At the bottom of boxing ring, there was the dossier “prehistory”, the first of the 14 “Plexus Black Box” dossiers, that I made to document, one per year, as an artist-researcher, Plexus activities from the pre-history to 1990. Next to it was made an art altar, with an earth mound on the floor, made by an icosaedron sculpture by Ray Kelly, inspired by Bucky Fuller, with inside a picture of the Rivington School before being shut down by the City of New York in early 1993, next to the Nuraghic Warrior sculpture which was buried in 1989 in the ground of Rivington School, and then recovered in June 1993, as part of my field research for the Summer Institute. This small installation served to display some Consent Forms for Research Activities Involving Human Subjects. The audience, to pass in the main room, had to pass through two cocoons sculptures reflecting life and death by Frank Pio. The small copy of the black box floating sculpture by Ciro Ciriaco was suspended from the ceiling, above the American Indian statuette, placed next to a large amount of records and relics of Plexus activities. Off center of this set there were two wood Buddha statuette, placed facing opposite sides, above the Magic Box, a sculpture by Aaron Barr. At the

right side of this second art altar, there was Eve Vaterlaus' Homunculus sculpture, showing a little man closed in a large bottle full of water. On the south wall near to the east corner there was a gem sculpture by John Torreano, with a copy of my dissertation proposal displaced. On the west side wall there is a photo documentation by Georgetta Stonefish from the 1992 Carloforte Well Being Columbus event. From the opening day to the closing day, every day there was a full calendar of activities involving artists, community people and art students from the course "Current Issues in Art Education" in which both Frank Pio and myself were part of as students. As a conclusion, two boxes overflowed of Plexus records and relics, placed inside and outside of them and before to be sealed, it was signed by participants and audience the original "Plexus Boxing Ring of Freedom," from the first appearance of Plexus Black Box in Rome at the Metateatro show in 1989. The sealed two boxes were then carried out from the Rosenberg Gallery by a group of community participants, among which were David Boyle, Jose Rodriguez, Rolando Politi, and myself as a symbolic returning or irepatriation of art" as well as of the "Plexus Black Box" into the community. This was the last event under inquiry.

Figure 50

A New Art Contract to Be Signed in Goree



Artwork by Gaetano Brundu, Cagliari, 1988

## 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 frozen 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 understandings.

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, Giuseppi 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 desensesitized 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 genius, 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)

Arthur 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 autodefinition 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 mean 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 Campboll 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 dematerialization 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: “Mytho-Compressionism”. 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)

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 etimological 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 begun 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". It is 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."

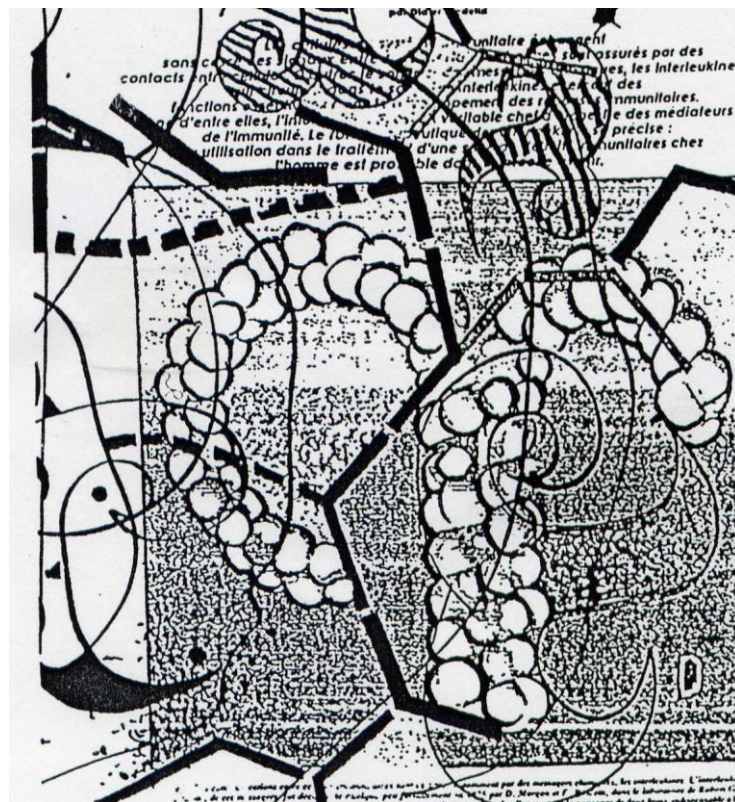
I was intrigued enough by those images very similar to mine "baffo," that appears suddenly on the panorama of science, connected to the mechanisms of immunity that are inner most mechanisms in defence of the organism. Also there a sign of strong vitality that I believe is at

the bottom of the mystery of life and of the survival of beings and of species. The mystery of my fantasy solidified, the animal pregerminal vitality and the intimate 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 as living structure born from the environmental interaction between biology and culture, is 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 ìartî 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 Odita. 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-ism," 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, not 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.

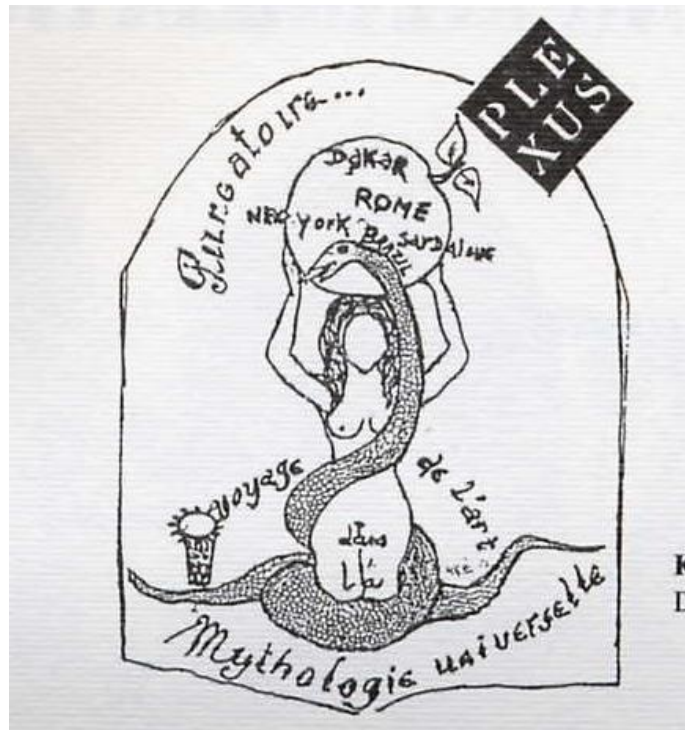
There is no one-point conclusion in this study, and the artist as researcher aware of it, and intentionally, following the open framework used to conduct the study, stops his emic understanding by introducing the emic openness and knowledge offered by the conscious act of reflection made in Dakar by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

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## APPENDIX A

### QUALIFICATIONS OF THE CANDIDATE

As a cultural director as well as a producer, Sandro Dernini since 1980 has his focus on multicultural interdisciplinary events in art, science and technology.

Born in Cagliari, the capital of the autonomous County of Sardinia, an island in the Mediterranean sea which is part of Italy, he received his doctorate in Biology at the University of Cagliari, 1974.

After his doctoral degree, Dernini moved to Rome. As assistant professor of prof. Carlo De Marco at the Biochemistry Institute of the University “La Sapienza,” from 1974 to 1978, he specialized in researching on qualitative and quantitative aminoacids separations, and published in 21 national and international scholarly journals of the field such as Journal of Chromatology, Archives of Biochemistry and Biophysics, Molecular & Cellular Biochemistry, Italian Journal of Biochemistry.

At the same time, in the mid- 1970's, he became sensitive to the separation between university life and outside world of Italy's then critical social and political reality. Therefore, he became actively involved in the cultural planning of a new alternative cultural group, L.I.A.C.A. (Italian League of Cultural Alternative Associations), and he promoted the opening, in 1976, in Cagliari, of an alternative performance space, Spazio A, the first multimedia performance space opened in Sardinia. At the end of the '70s, Dernini gave his resignation from the university and moved to New York.

In New York, he conceived a new operating model for national cultural institutes operating abroad. He presented his proposal to the French and Italian Department of New York University that approved it. Then Dernini raised the funds and as executive

director, opened the activities the new Center for Contemporary Italian Culture of New York University, in 1980.

At New York University he organized many cultural events. Of particular interest for this study was the successful program "The Artist in the First Person." He resigned from his position at New York University and in 1982 founded Plexus. Plexus started as a non profit cultural organization running a performance space in the Chelsea area of Manhattan .

Moving to the Lower East Side, in 1984 Dernini with Giuseppe Sacchi opened and produced the Shuttle Theatre, a community-based performance venue. In 1985 he conceived with Butch Morris the format of the first Plexus "artopera" Goya Time, New York, 1985, which was performed at the Cultural Civic Center CUANDO. In 1986 Dernini as artist appeared in several "eating art" performances, and "Nuraghic" ritual art performances, in addition to creating ritual art altars. From 1986 to 1989, and from 1992 to 1994, he received a full scholarship from the Art and Art Professions Department of the School of Education of New York University to attend the Ph.D. program in Art Education.

As graduate assistant of prof. Angiola Churchill, co-director of the International Center for Advanced Studies in Art, (ICASA). There from 1986 to 1989 he had a long training which allowed him to become more familiar with current contemporary art issues which were discussed and raised up within four international ICASA symposia which he helped to organize at New York University: "The Dematerialization of Art;" "The Redefinition of Art in the collision of the Post-Modern World;" "The Convergence of Art and Philosophy;" and "Art and Societies."

In the Spring of 1989, in New York, a group of representatives of academic institutions and cultural organizations, including Plexus, established the 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium. He became the coordinator of the Consortium. In the middle of



1989 he moved back in Rome to develop internationally the 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium project, and performed the first historical presentation of "Plexus Black Box" within the art opera 1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte. In 1990, in Sardinia, he was appointed by prof. David W. Ecker, executive director of I.S.A.L.T.A. (International Society for the Advancement of Living Traditions in Art), director of the Mediterranean basin operations. In the middle of 1990, he organized the first Plexus International Forum, "Plexus Black Box."

In 1992, within the Italian national program for 500th Columbus's Anniversary, he coordinated in Carloforte, in the island of San Pietro, Sardinia, site of the controversial "Columbus' route correction, " the First International Columbus Reconciliation Forum on the theme "The Well Being in the XXI Century." On that occasion he managed the signature of a collaboration agreement signed by the rector of the University of Cagliari and the University of St. Louis in Senegal.

From 1992 to 1994, at the University of Cagliari, he developed and managed with prof. Franco Meloni, the opening of the Interdepartmental Well Being Center which was established formally in the Fall of 1994. In 1993, he moved back from Italy to New York. From 1992 to 1994, he served as graduate assistant to prof. David Ecker. He assisted him in the development of the 1993 NYU Lower East Side Living Traditions Summer Institute, and in 1994, he was appointed by prof. Leonard Lehrer, chairman of the Department of Art and Art Professions, coordinator of the activities in the community of the NYU Lower East Side Living Traditions in Art Summer Institute. This experience improved his knowledge of the Living Traditions field research and of the institutional setting of the relationship between the academy and the community. In 1994, he moved back in Italy, continuing to work to build international collaborations with the New York University project "Navigating Global Cultures." In 1995, within the Italian national program for the Marconi's 100 Years Anniversary, Dernini organized at the

University of Cagliari a series of events within the New York University project "Navigating Global Cultures," in collaboration with the NYU Commission on Experimental Aesthetics of the School of Education. "Navigating Global Cultures" events were concluded with the Second Well Being International Reconciliation Forum. During this forum at the University of Cagliari, participants established the Consortium for the Well Being in the XXI Century and he became the coordinator of the Consortium.

In the Fall of 1996, on the occasion of the World Food Summit in Rome, he co-organized the art event "From Welfare to Well Being" held in Rome by the Organizing Committee of the Consortium for the Well Being in the XXI Century, in collaboration with the FAO Food and Nutrition Division.

Since 1985, he has given several lectures on Plexus and its activities. These lectures were hosted in 1985 at New York University by I.C.A.S.A. (International Center for Advanced Studies in Art); in 1986 at the African Cultural Center Malick Sy; in 1987 at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, and in 1996 at Spelman College in Atlanta. From 1985 to the present he has organized large interactive international art events, held in Rome, Dakar and Goree Island in Senegal, in New York, and Sardinia.

APPENDIX B  
LETTER REQUESTING PARTICIPATION

To.....

New York, April 10, 1994

BRING YOUR SERPENT

Dear artist in the first person,

As I said to you on the phone, finally, my Ph.D. Dissertation Committee at New York University has approved my Ph.D. dissertation proposal "A Multicultural Aesthetic Inquiry Into "The Living Plexus Black Box," an International Community-Based Art Project."

As part of this study, I shall need to collect from a selected delimited group of participants their recollections of contributions and related experiences.

The first step that I need to accomplish is that you provide me, as soon as possible, with the following information, illustrated if you wish.

- A. A recollection of your contribution to the Plexus project under study.
- B. A reflective description of your experience related to the events in which you participated.
- C. How you would like to be presented in the study. A short paragraph or two of your vita and a photo of yourself.

The second step in your participation is to attend a panel discussion forum. At this forum you shall be required to describe your experience of The Living Plexus Black Box, in terms of its artistic, critical and theoretical dimensions. The location will be arranged as soon as I collect all the material requested in the first step. In order to implement the second step and proceed with the dissertation, may I ask you to give me the information requested above by June 15, 1994, with the following written permission: "I authorize Sandro Dernini to publish in his dissertation my text and the photos of my art works."

As you know, I have devoted so much energy, belief, time and resources in this Plexus dissertation because I believe that this study when it is finished will extend our experience of Plexus, beyond that form to which we have known Plexus until now. I look forward your participation.

My mailing address is Sandro Dernini, P.O.Box 20581, New York, N.Y. 10009.

Artistically yours,

Sandro Dernini

## APPENDIX C

### CHRONOLOGY OF PLEXUS ACTIVITIES

1982:

June 13, A Modern Sacrifice, opening party, Plexus performance space, New York.

December 31, Garden of Fuzz, a party, Plexus performance space, New York.

1983:

February, Hair, a dance performance by Marika, Plexus performance space, New York.

April 19 to May 1, Turtle Dreams, a "world premiere" performance, by Meredith Monk, Plexus performance space, New York.

April 25, Cathode Cruel and Birth, a new music and theatre performance by Fiction Music Theatre and by Susan Landau, Plexus performance space, New York.

May 2, Disorder/Discipline/Future, an art performance and exhibition by Gianfranco Mantegna, Plexus performance space, New York.

From May 13 to May 22, Pavlov, a theatre performance by Charles Guarino, Plexus performance space, New York.

From May 17 to May 19, Boomba, a theatre performance by Ily Huemer, Plexus performance space, New York.

May 23, Labyrinth, an art installation and performance by Paolo Buggiani, Plexus performance space, New York.

From May 27 to June 5, Spectre Nymph and Living Set, an dance performance by Ellen Fisher, Plexus performance space, New York.

From May 31 to June 2, Mission Impossible by Ily Huemer, Plexus performance space, New York.

From June 23 to June 25, New Directions, a multi-media program featuring:

June 23, Raw Sanivlam, a Cruel WarGame, an audiovisual performance by Giancarlo Schiaffini and Lorenzo Taiuti, Plexus performance space, New York.

June 24, How She Sees It, an art performance by Arleen Schloss; Order Eat with Des's Refuses, an art performance coordinated by Michael Kean; Moving Still Film a film screening by Richard Sanca; Up & Down the Elevator an art performance by Stephen Wischert, Plexus performance space, New York.

June 25, Codes of Abstract Conduct, a new music performance by Craig Burk Group; Darts, a new music performance by John Zorn, Plexus performance space, New York.

From July 22 to July 24, Babylon Breakdown Babylon, 3 day of Art Reggae Festival, Plexus performance space, New York.

From November to December, Plexus 6, a Zone for the Next Zone, a weekly multimedia art cabaret, with Mitch Ross as master of ceremony, featuring Ken Hiratsuka, Willoughby Sharp, Wolfgang Staele, Susan Britton, Marty Watts, Maroon Azuri, Plexus performance space, New York

1984:

February 11, Science & Art, a multimedia show by VAP, Plexus Performance space, New York.

From February 14 to February 19, Leap of Faith, an epic theatre project, presented by International Performance Actions, coordinated by Willom Brugman, Plexus performance space, New York.

March 1, closing of the Plexus performance space, New York.

June 13, opening of The Shuttle Theatre by Giuseppe Sacchi, Sandro Dernini, Brian Goodfellow, Karl Berger, and presented by Plexus, Creative Music Foundation and Artists International Communication, New York.

June, Genevieve Waite with Robert Arron, a weekly music performance, The Shuttle Theatre, New York.

June, Love Songs, Nothing Else, Love Songs, a weekly music cabaret performance by Tony Love; and Tigressa, the all-female rhythm explosion, The Shuttle Theatre, New York.

From June 29 to July 13, Girls Night Out, an art exhibition curated by Carlo McCormick, The Shuttle Theatre, New York.

July 14 and 21, The Pirates of Techno Hell and The Final-Upside Down Shown, art performances by Julius Klein; Time Art, performance by Ralston Farina, The Shuttle Theatre, New York.

July 27, opening of the art exhibition of Peter Grass, curated by Steve Kaplan, The Shuttle Theatre, New York.

August 4, opening of the art exhibition of Bernd Naber, curated by Steve Kaplan, The Shuttle Theatre, New York.

From July to December, a permanent music program by Sound Unity coordinated by William Parker, The Shuttle Theatre, New York.

- From July to December, Long Shot, a poetry series presented by Nuyorican Poets Cafe, featuring Allen Ginsberg, Mickey Pinero, Miguel Algarin, The Shuttle Theatre, New York.

From August to December, The Artist in the First Person, an independent art exhibition program made with Joan Waltermath, Luca Pizzorno, Julius Klein, Ralston Farina, Mickey Pinero, Arleen Schloss, The Shuttle Theatre, New York.

August 24, The Art World is a Jungle, 120 performances of 30 seconds or 60 performances of 60 seconds, The Shuttle Theatre, New York.

August 25, In Order to Survive, a block association event performed by William Parker, Miguel Algarin, Karl Berger, Bruce Richard Nuggent, Roy Campbell, Jeemeel Mondoc, Arleen Schloss, David Street, Alfa Diallo, Sara Farley, Sandro Dernini, Giuseppe Sacchi, James Oliver Jones Jr.,

Dennis Charles, held on East 6th Street, between Avenue A and B, in front the Shuttle Theatre, New York.

September 12, 19, 26, Voice of Ammerica, a cabaret program featuring: Uncle Sam by Dave Street; Taxi Cabaret by Rockets Redglare; The Poet Himself by Marty Watt, The Shuttle Theatre, New York.

From September 27 to September 30, The Lower East Side Music, Poetry, Arts Festival '84, presented by Sound Unity, Nuyorican Poets Cafe, Artists International Communication, The Shuttle Theatre, New York.

On October 18, Plexus International Center for Urban Resources started again its art program activities, The Shuttle Theatre, New York.

From October to December, Plexus presented the Shuttle Lab art program.: "Body Driven," a dance project by Betsy Hulton, "Frame of Life," a filmmakers program, featuring: Andrew Bergen, Julius Klein, Christine Vachon, Susan Graes, Liza Bear. "Collage of Happening," a performance program, featuring: Time Art by Ralston Farina, Uncle Sam by Dave Street, The Upside Down Show by Julius Klein, Do you think Nixon knows people were happier before he was president? by Paul Miller, and Alien Comic. "The Last Song of the Swan," a playwrights program, curated by Giuseppe Sacchi, featuring: Soliloquies and Others Words Said at the Time by Rei Povod; King Salmon by James A. Doogherty; Hoodlum Hearts by Louis E. Griffith; Rent a Coffin by Pedro Pietri. "Mephistopheles: The Artist in the First Person," featuring Escape from Purgatory, by Ralston Farina; Mountains Men, Dreams, Magic Music by Leoponar Witlarge; Slimming Window by Julius Klein and Samarcanda by Luca Pizzorno, "Cantos," a poetry program; and "Magic Flutes," a music program, The Shuttle Theatre, New York.

From December 17 to December 23, Second Lower East Side Jazz Festival '84.

1985:

January 16, The Artist in the First Person, a lecture introduced by Sandro Dernini and performed by Ralston Farina, Paolo Buggiani, William Parker, Ken Hiratsuka, Peter Grass, Joan Walthermath, Willoughby Sharp, Luca Pizzorno, Arleen Schloss, Julius Klein, Leo Panar, James Mc Coy, Amir Bey, Liz and Val, Snoky Tate. New York University, New York.

From March 22 to March 29, DADA, a poetry music workshop moderated by Valery Oisteanu, The Shuttle Theatre, New York.

From May 15 to May 19, Third Lower East Side Music Festival 1985, C.U.A.N.D.O., New York.

June 13, Goya Time, 1985, New York, an art opera, by Gretta Safarty, Sandro Dernini and Butch Morris, CUANDO, New York.

July 11, Castigat Ridendo Mores, a open contest for comedians, by Giuseppe Sacchi, The Shuttle Theatre, New York.

July 17, In the Night of No Moon: Purgatorio Show '85 New York, An Open Call to Artists for the future international community house, a three hour event with over 350 artists, dedicated to Ralston Farina, CUANDO, New York.

November, a multi-facet art workshop, organized by Giuseppe Sacchi, The Shuttle Theatre, New York.

November, the building of the Shuttle Theatre burned in a fire accident.

1986

February 27, Eve, an Art Opera, about Escape for Donna Purgatorius from 1986 Anno Domini by the Multinational Chain Gang of Downtown N.Y., a Purgatorio Show, with 220 artists, CUANDO, New York.

May 15, 1987: Du Purgatoire ou Paradis, Voyage de l'Art dans la Mythologie Universelle, a public presentation, by Sandro Dernini, with Langouste M'Bow, Kre M'Baye, Mangone NDiaye, Gianni Villella, Centre Culturel Africain M. Sy, Dakar.

September 1, 1987 Fire!! Il Serpente di Pietra, Fire!! an Universal Mythological Art Journey, a performance presentation, by Sandro Dernini, Gaetano Brundu, Cicci Borghi, Cooperativa Centro Storico, Cagliari.

September 4, For a New Cappella Sistina, a performance presentation, by Sandro Dernini and Armando Soldaini, Magazzini Generali, Rome.

October 25, Eating Art, Part 1: Fresh Mozzarella, an art performance by Sandro Dernini with Lynne Kanter, Eve Vaterlaus, Donald Sherman, Mitch Ross, Gianfranco Mantegna, Joan Waltermath, Franco Ciarlo and Gaby, Paolo Buggiani, Cosimo Leo di Ricatto, Charlie Monrow, Bernd Naber, Fusion Arts, New York.

November 3, The Serpent Open Call, by Mitch Ross, Helene Valentin, Frank Shifreen, Marcos Margal, Sandro Dernini, Leonard Horowitz, David Boylet, Arturo Lindsay, New York.

From December 12 to December 14, The Fourth Lower East Side Music Festival, Alchemical Theatre, New York.

1987

January 17, Plexus book presentation," a performance by Paolo Buggiani and Greta Safarty, Fusion Arts, New York.

January 31, Plexus performance by Willem Brugman, Cosai Production, Amsterdam.

February 13, Bring your Serpent, an art installation by Gaetano Brundu, Cicci Borghi, Anna Saba, Franco Meloni, Randi Hansen, Piernicola Cocco, Antonello Dessi, Luciano Rombi, Enrico Pau, Luigi Mazzarelli, Dessi Gallery, Cagliari.

February 18, Do You Think it Is Possible To Eat Andy Warhol By Eating An Campbell Soup Can?, a phenomenological inquiry performance by Sandro Dernini with Willoughby Sharp, Peter Grass, Bernd Naber, Donald Sherman, Lynne Kanter, Franco Ciarlo, Helen Valentin, Patrizia Anichini, Joan Waltermath, Patrizia Anichini Gallery, New York.

June 29, Il Serpente di Roma, a parade performance in the streets of Trastevere by Arturo Lindsay, Lorenzo Pace, Miguel Algarin, Maggie Reilly, Miguel Algarin, Louis Lopez, Sandro Dernini, Willem Brugman, Alessandro Figurelli and Aliki, Armando Soldaini, Gianni Villella, Rome.

June 30, Il Serpente di Roma, a presentation to the press by Gianni Villella, Carlo Cusatelli, Pino Licastro, Paolo Maltese, Willem Brugman, Shalom Neuman, Miguel Algarin, Arturo Lindsay, Giovanna Ducrot, Armando Soldaini, Sandro Dernini, Teatro in Trastevere, Rome.



From July 1 to July 4, Il Serpente di Pietra, Plexus Art Co-Opera N.4, with the participation of 160 artists, Sanctuary of Sa Itria, Gavoi, Sardinia.

December 23, Plexus presentation by Youssouph Traoré, Sandro Dernini, Pathé Diop, Auditorium INSEPS, Dakar, Senegal.

1988:

February 20, A Redefinition of a Campbell Soup Can, a performance art installation by Lorenzo Pace, Leonard Horowitz, Lynne Kanter, Sandro Dernini, Loisada Samba Band, Wess Power, Barnaby Ruhe, Frank Shifreen, CUANDO, New York.

May 21, Open Call for Plexus International Art Slavery Manifesto Group Shot, a photo event by Ivan Dalla Tana, Rivington School, New York.

June 15, Chiamata Aperta per il Manifesto degli Schiavi dell'Arte, a photo event by Adriano Mordenti, Metateatro, Rome.

June 18, Chiamata Aperta: Una Foto Storica per il Manifesto degli Schiavi dell'Arte, a photo event on board the Elisabeth boat, Carloforte.

June 25, a photo event, inside the Colosseum, Rome.

July 4, Fatti Nostri negli 80's per i 90's (Made in the 80's for the 90's), a Plexus recall performance, by Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Massimo Sarchielli, Sandro Dernini, Bionca Florelli, Giovanna Ducrot, Roberto Federici, Il Mago di Oz, Rome.

July, recovering performance of the Arturo Lindsay buried messenger Gianni Vilella's garden, Rome.

August 26, The Serpent Parade, a ritual art procession, made by 200 participants, from La Medina of Dakar to the House of the Slaves, Gorée.

August 30, Lettre Ouverte Aux Artistes Du Monde (Open Letter to the Artists of the World), written by Youssouph Traore, Zulu M'Baye, Sandro Dernini, Langouste M'Dow, Assane M'Baye, Pathe Diop, Club Litteraire David Diop, Dakar.

November 3, The Serpent, Purgatorio Show 1988, first act of an art co-opera, at CUANDO, New York.

November 11, Il Viaggio del Serpente, second act, performance by Dinu Ghezze, Sandro Dernini, Miguel Algarin, Arturo Lindsay, Stephen DiLauro, George Chaikin, Ivan Dalla Tana, Baldo Diodato, Gianfranco Mantegna, Franco Ciarlo, Lynne Kanter, Bobst Library, New York University, New York; performance by Franco Meloni, Antonio Caboni, Andrea Portas, Antonello Dessi, Anna Saba, Randi Hansen, Maria Grazia Medda, Giovanna Caltagirone, University of Cagliari, Cagliari.

November 14, La Madonna dello Schiavo, third act, performance on board Elisabeth, Carloforte.

From November 17 to November 23, Chiamata Aperta Incontri Tra Artisti sul tema Tradizione e Modernità Rivitalizzazione del Centro Storico, fourth act, a street performance by Antonio Caboni and Tommaso Meloni, Cagliari.

1989

January 1, The Arrival of the Art Slave Boat, fifth act, an art installation and performance by Assane M'Baye, Launguste M'Dow, Youssouph Traore, Awa M'Baye, Sandro Dernini, Franco Meloni, Willem Brugman, Door of no return, House of the Slaves in Goree, Dakar.

January 3, Open Letter to the Artists of the World, a reading performance by Zule M'Baye, Willem Brugman, Anna Piccioni at the entrance of the House of the Slaves, Goree, Dakar

January 8, Plexus art installation by Langouste D'Dow, Jo Accam, Sandro Dernini, Agit Art Atelier, Dakar.

January 19, Plexus press conference by Franco Meloni and presentation of the video made in Gorée by Valeria Meloni, Auditorium School of Science, University of Cagliari.

March 10, establishment of the 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium by Sandro Dernini, Mico Licastro, Earl S. Davis, Arturo Lindsay, Bruce Breland, George Chaikin, James Finkelstein, Jose Rodriguez, Nilda Cortez, Angiola Churchill, John Gilbert, New York.

March 10, A PLEXUS Campbell Soup Can Escaping from the Art World Control, a performance by Arturo Lindsay, Miguel Algarin, Sandro Dernini, Okechukwu Odita, Joannee Freedom, Nilda Cortez, Jose Rodriguez, Leonard Horowitz, CUANDO, New York.

April 7, The Art World TV Deconstruction/Reconstruction Show: The Rivington School or What?, a performance by Okechukwu Odita, Sandro Dernini, Arturo Lindsay, Maggie Reilly, Ray Kelly, Leonard Horowitz, Rivington School, New York.

May, Plexus White Box, a ritual art performance by Arturo Lindsay, Sandro Dernini, Miguel Algarin, David Boyle, Leonard Horowitz, Wess Power, Stephen DiLauro, Nada School, Lower East Side, New York.

May 25, 1992: The Departure of An Art Human Shuttle For Freedom Journeying to the Realm of a New Planet Called Time -Art, an international interactive event by George Chaikin, Sandro Dernini, Stephen DiLauro, Leonard Horowitz, Wess Power, David Boyle, Shock Troupe Theatre, Institute of Computer Arts, School of Visual Arts, New York.

June 25, Arrival of the Art Shuttle, ritual performance-presentation by Sandro Dernini, Franco Meloni, Willem Brugman, Sara Jackson, Stephen DiLauro, David Boyle, Antonio Caboni, Tanya Gerstle, Department of Physics of the University of Cagliari.

June 25, La Festa del Sole, a ritual performance by Antonio Caboni, Willem Brugman, Stephen DiLauro, David Boyle, Sara Jackson, Tanya Gerstle, Sandro Dernini, Monte Liuru, Sardinia.

July 1 - 2, 1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte, an art opera by Stephen DiLauro, Willem Brugman, Tanya Gerstle, David Boyle, Antonio Caboni, Giancarlo Schiaffini, Sandro Dernini, Maria Pia Marsala, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Micaela Serino, Annetta Ducrot, Roberto Federici, Loreto Pappadia, Metateatro, Rome.

July 4, Plexus Black Box Open Call, by Franco Meloni, Department of Physics of the University of Cagliari, Cagliari

1990:

February 3, 1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte, part two: The Telematic Team, a performance by Ciriaco Ciriaco, Giancarlo Schiaffini, Maria Pia Marsala, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Sandro Dernini, Micaela Serino, Piero Cianflone, Metateatro, Rome.

February, Carneval, a street art parade performance by Maria Pia Marsala, Micaela Serino, Sandro Dernini, Loreto Papadia, Calcata, Rome.

May, Ethnoreality: Plexus Black Box Ethnoreality, a performance-installation by Frans Evers and Willem Brugman, Amsterdam.

From June 23 to 24, Festa della Pietra Solare, a performance by Antonio Caboni and Tommaso Meloni, Liuru Montain of San Priamo, Muravera, Cagliari.

June 30 and July 1, 1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte, part three: Plexus Black Box, an art installation and performance by Piero Cianflone, Anna Piccioni, Antonio Caboni, Andrea Portas, Antonello Dessi, Carlo Cusatelli, Fabi, Willem Brugman, Frans Evers, Paolo Damiani, Ciriaco Ciriaco, Arturo Lindsay, Giancarlo Schiaffini, Lynne Kanter, Elsa Rizzi, Frank Shifreen, Mauro Brusa, Roberto Federici, David Ecker, Okechukwu Odita, Sandro Dernini, Maria Pia Marsala, Metateatro, Rome.

July 2, Plexus Black Box, a Multicultural Data Bank for la Caravella dell'Arte, a round table with Frans Evers, Ciriaco Ciriaco, David Ecker, Okechukwu Odita, Arturo Lindsay, Frank Shifreen, Sandro Dernini, Metateatro, Rome.

July 4, 1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte, Elisabeth, La Caravella dell'Arte, presentation to the Mayor by Odita Okechukwu, David E. Ecker, Sandro Dernini, Carloforte, Sardinia.

December 29, 1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte, part four: Columbina La Caravella Telematica, a performance by Mons. Dante Balboni, Maria Pia Marsala, Sandro Dernini, Giancarlo Schiaffini, Fabrizio and Simone Bertuccioli, Stelio Fiorenza, Micaela Serino, Mauro Brusa, Rocco Mitraglia, Lidia Biondi, Franco Nuzzo, Teatro in Trastevere, Rome.

1991

February 22, Colombina, ceremony, Madonna del Buon Viaggio, Rome.

- July 4, Cambio di Rotta, A Fleet of Projects, performance by Maria Pia Marsala, Sandro Dernini, Guido Pegna, Ciriaco Ciriaco, Nadia Campanini, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Maria Grazia Medda, on board the Elisabeth, Carloforte.

October 30, opening of Plexus International Storage, Cagliari.

December 14, La Zattera della Liberta' Plexus Black Box by Ciriaco Ciriaco, an art performance by Ciriaco Ciriaco, Piero Cianflone, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Carlo Dernini, Sandro Dernini, on board the Elisabeth and in the port, Carloforte.

December 15, Opening, an art installation, by Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Ciriaco Ciriaco, Piero Cianflone, Sandro Dernini, Plexus International Storage, Cagliari.

1992

January, La Posta in Gioco, a mail art installation performance by Sandro Dernini, Gaetano Brundu, Franco Meloni, Anna Saba, Maria Pia Marsala, Giancarlo Schiaffini, Fabrizio Bertuccioli, La Galleria Comunale d'Arte, Cagliari.

From March 13 to May 25, Plexus Imprinting: A Story, an art installation made by Anna Saba, Plexus International Storage, Cagliari.

From June to September, Storage Calls New York City, an art installation made by Gaetano Brundu, Plexus International Storage, Cagliari.

July 4, Bring Your Serpent, art installation, Bastioni di Santa Croce, Cagliari.

September, Multiples, an art installation by Antonello Dessi, Plexus International Storage, Cagliari.

October 10, Reconciliation Cambio di Rotta: The Voyage of Elisabeth, a music performance by Giancarlo Schiaffini, art installation by Gabriella Locci and Maria Grazia Medda, Auditorium, Carloforte.

October 12, Plexus Storage Calls NYC, performance, Plexus International Storage, by George Chaikin, Lorenzo Pace, Patricia Parker Nicholson, Cagliari.

December 10, Human Right Day, a round table, City Hall, New York.

December 10, The Deconstruction of a PLEXUS-CUANDO Event, Purgatorio Show 1992, The Voyage of the Elisabeth: In Order to Survive Il Viaggio del Serpente, a performance by William Parker, Patricia Nicholson Parker, Alfa Diallo, Jose Rodriguez, Barnaby Ruhe, Lorenzo Pace, George Chaikin, David Ecker, Sandro Dernini, George Chaikin, Okechukwu Odita, Georgetta Stonefish, Auditorium Barney Building of New York University, New York.

December 23, Freedom, an art installation by Corrado Pani, Sara Scalas, Sabina Tatti, Libreria Dattena, Cagliari.

1993

May 29, The Repatriation of a Plexus Campbell Soup Can in the Artworld, a performance by Sandro Dernini and José Rodriguez, USA Club, New York.

June 16, Cultural Navigation and Community: Art, Reconciliation and Well Being, a round table, Auditorium Barney Building of New York University, New York.

July 1, The Repatriation of Art into the Community, a performance by Sandro Dernini, Nuyorican Poets Café, New York.

From July 1 to July 30, The Nuraghic Voyage of the Elisabeth, an art installation by Sandro Dernini, Rosenberg Gallery, New York University, New York.

October 11, Plexus Black Box: Art & Science, an art and science presentation by Guido Pegna, Franco Meloni, George Chaikin, Sandro Dernini, The Cooper Union, New York.

October 12, Columbus Day: Marconi Columbus Open Call for Reconciliation, Art, and Well Being, In Preparation of the Second International Forum on the Well Being in the XXI Century, an art

installation by Andrea Portas, Anna Saba, Antonello Dessi, Giovanna Caltagirone, Rolando Politi, Andrea Grassi, Ivan Dalla Tana, Franco Meloni, Giorgetta Stonefish; performance by Miguel Algarin, Lorenzo Pace, Patricia Nicholson Parker, Guido Pegna, Joannee Freedom, Maria Pia Marsala, Sandro Dernini, Rodolfo Maria Dernini, Saint John The Divine Cathedral, New York.

October 13, The Voyage of the Elisabeth, a round table at the Barney Building of New York University, New York.

October 13, The Repatriation of Art Into the Community, a performance at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, New York.

November, from to 3 15, A Contract to Be Negotiated, Columbus Egg: The Living Plexus Black Box of 'The Voyage of the Elisabeth,' two week art events, Rosenberg Gallery of New York University, New York.

1994

June 6-19, Art and Science Today: The Role of Imagination. A week events, Cittadella dei Musei, organized by the Interdepartmental Well Being Center, Cagliari.

1995

June 26, Art for Well Being September, an analogic performance by Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome.

September 21, The Marconi Open Call of Cagliari for the Well Being in the XXI Century, an on-line art event on board the Elisabeth boat, Cagliari.

October 12, Navigating Global Cultures: Marconi Open Call, an interactive on-line art event connecting University of Cagliari, New York University, The Cooper Union, Cagliari and New York.

October 15, The Voyage of the Elisabeth: The Ark of the Well Being, an art event on board the Elisabeth boat in the port of S. Antioco, Sardinia.

December 15-17, Navigating Global Cultures: Strategies for the Well Being in the XXI Century, Second International Well Being and Reconciliation Forum, organized by the Interdepartmental Well Being Center of the University of Cagliari, Cagliari.

1996

November 13-20, From Welfare to Well Being: Eating Art, Get the Best From Your Food, Food for All, a special art event organized by the Organizing Committee of the Consortium for the Well Being in the XXI Century, Roof Garden of Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **PLEXUS DOCUMENTS**

#### Document 1

##### 1982 Plexus Opening Statement

Plexus: a structure in the form of a network; any interlacing of parts.

Inter: between or among.

National: big or important enough to have significance for a whole nation.

Urban: characteristic of the city or city life.

Forum: any medium for open discussion.

Plexus is about the city - any city, every city. It is about the wonder of a skyline that won't stop climbing and a blanket of pollution that can't stop spreading. It's about an atmosphere that swell culture and swallows real estate. It's about a dream that is as illogical as soft watches and as seductive as the promise of immortality.

Plexus is dedicated to the preposition that all cities are not created equal, only the people who inhabit them. It is further committed to the proposition that the people of cities are creative survivalists who refuse and acknowledge the laws of nature and who glory in adversity. There is, in the collective heart of the people of the cities, a wild, unrelenting thirst for the impossible contradictions that make them simultaneous victims and victors.

Plexus believes that the creative involvement of the individual can do more to enhance a responsive environment than all the bureaucratic machinations of an infinity of public agencies. To this end, Plexus is designed to foster an international network of urban dreamers and realists, theoreticians and pragmatists.

Plexus means to proceed from observation through discussion and reflection to demonstration and celebration. Its goals are the achievement of a heightened understanding of the possibilities of the city and the definition of alternatives which will accelerate the realization of those possibilities.

Plexus will initiate exhibition, lectures and seminars on urban issues as well as sponsor media and performance events. It will also promote the exchange and dissemination of information on innovative ideas, projects and products which can enrich and ennoble the urban experience.

Plexus is situated in a 7,000 square foot loft space in the Chelsea section of Manhattan. It will be designed as a performance space to offer maximum flexibility for cultural and educational events.

While Plexus-sponsored activities will initially utilize the Chelsea space, it is hoped that they will spread throughout the urban complex in a manner as unruly and spontaneous as the city itself.

Made by Richard Flood, June 1982, New York

## Document 2

### Open Letter to All Artists of the World

We are informing you of the arrival of "The Ship of the Slaves of Art," awaited in Dakar, capital of Senegal, from December 23, 1988 to January 3, 1989.

After the first international event of the "Slaves of Art" in Sardinia, Italy, on July 4, 1987, with the participation of 160 artists from 23 nationalities;

after the departure of the metaphoric trip in the history and mythology of "The Ship of the Slaves of Art," from New York on February 1986;

there will be a second international event for the artists as independent producers in view of a debate on the Redefinition of Art and the research of a new kind of art contract, as a concrete expression according to the interests of the artists. This debate will be under the responsibility of the Club Littéraire David Diop and of the ANAPS, National Association of the Visual Artists of Senegal.

Within the scope of this international event all artists are invited to participate to realize the Plexus Art Co-Opera N°5, "The Electromagnetic Serpent," a simultaneous and synchronized presentation of art and science, which will be presented as a parade-show on January 1, 1989, in the island of Gorée, Dakar.

In the island of Gorée, in the House of the Slaves, the final act will be performed as a homage to the freedom of the Human Being.

The outcomes of this event will be reported to the world.

Therefore, Plexus International launches a call for all artists of the world to come to Dakar, from December 23, 1988, to January 3, 1989, to contribute to the opening of a credit line in favor of the International Art Community through the creation of an Art World Bank.

Made on August 30, 1988, at the Club Littéraire David Diop, Dakar, Senegal, by Youssouph Baro, Zulu M'Baye, Sandro Dernini, Assane M'Baye, Pathe Diop, Langouste M'Dow.

## Document 3

From

Columbus Reconciliation Forum on "The Well Being in the XXI Century"

"1992 Columbus Open Call of Carloforte for Reconciliation"

From the 9th to the 11th of October 1992 on the invitation of The 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium of New York, with the University of Rome “La Sapienza”, The University of Cagliari in Sardinia, the University of Saint Louis in Senegal, and the International Institute of Epistemology “La Magna Grecia” in Crotone-Rome, in collaboration with the Institute of Italian Encyclopedia Treccani, the Institute for the Italian American Experience, the Consortium for the Touristic Development of the City of Carloforte, the Consortium CIFRA, PLEXUS International Network, C.U.A.N.D.O. Inc. Cultural Community Civic Center Lower EastSide New York, and with the support of the City of Carloforte, the Presidency of the Government of Sardinia County and of the Presidency of the County Council of Sardinia and of the District of Cagliari, We have met in Carloforte, on the island of San Pietro, off of Sardinia, as individuals from 3 continents: America, Africa, and Europe (including Russia).

We reflected upon the voyages of Christopher Columbus to the Americas as an issue of “Reconciliation” for the Well Being of the Twenty-First Century, through the following program of round tables and presentations on:

Cultural navigations;

The Departure of a Project of a Mutual Cooperation;

An Hypothesis of Reconciliation;

The Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations;

Europe and the “Historically Others”;

Well Being, Ethics, Health, Nutrition and Quality of Life;

The Memorial of Goree-Almandies Project;

A Plexus Proposal of Cooperation.

We, as participants of the Columbus Reconciliation Forum, are making the following Open Call from San Pietro Island to the World:

- 1) The political and economic order of the past 500 years since the landing of Christopher Columbus in the Americas, having failed to bring about the necessary Reconciliation and Well Being of the people of the world, we, as individuals, call upon other individuals and communities to challenge the existing order.
- 2) In order to achieve the synthesis of cultures and the true understanding of differences which are converging in a new identity for human rights in the 21st Century, all people as individuals and communities must assume responsibility for the life of their community. Those nations that impose a racial identity are the primary obstacle to Reconciliation.
- 3) Unwarranted imposition by governments and social and political organizations on individuals and communities must be avoided in order to enhance Human Rights, Dignity and Solidarity.
- 4) We declare that sustainable development obtained with full respect for natural resources, can guarantee an acceptable quality of life to the future generations of the world.
- 5) We are conscious that women of the third world, as well as other regions, are the key producers of the economy in their respective countries, but they are not involved in making decisive societal choices. This situation has resulted in the deterioration of their



economic, social and health condition. We call for all necessary help for their Well Being.

6) We commit ourselves to the development of new channels of communication to make it possible for the people of all nations and cultures to conduct free and independent exchange as a means of “Reconciliation.”

7) We support individual and community projects dealing with Human Rights and Reconciliation.

Therefore we issue an OPEN CALL for the development of creative approaches to the empowerment of the individual and of the community.

We need alternative visions to attain the ROUTE CORRECTION necessary to bring about the true meaning of the CALL FOR RECONCILIATION and WELL BEING in the XX1st Century.

Made in Carloforte, San Pietro Island, Sardinia, October 11, 1992, by the Working Group on The Strategies for Health: Saverio Civili, Earl S. Davis, Dennis deLeon, Sandro Dernini, David Ecker, Maigda Ka, Aldo Landi, Okechukwu Odita, Marvin Lumsden, Giovanni Panatta, Jose Rodriguez.

## APPENDIX E

### “INSIDER” PLEXUS PAPERS

Aaron Barr

Transcript of the interview made in New York, in November, 1994.

Plexus for me is an art spiritual journey.

What I placed inside the Plexus Magic Box is something that reflects the teaching of my master Baba Mutananda who does not belong to any particular religion but following his own spiritual path through the chakri recognized our universal relation with the world.

The Plexus Magic Box is a multi-cultural event. With some Plexus memorabilia and other materials belonging to me, I created, inside the box a Plexus universe, something that told a story about the unseen world of Plexus and of its spiritual path/journey, on different levels and places, in which I got involved. I let the material to go together as in a collage.

What I experienced was a universal love which as a universal message I understood to be in the end the ultimate message of Plexus of reconciliation through art.

I remember vaguely the USA Club Plexus event with the serpent around the magic box.

I can describe my experience with Plexus Black Box as a multicultural event with so many different elements and the swimming pool event at CUANDO in 1988 was an example of it.

Plexus can be described only in action where all people go together in action and not as a theory or a thought. Plexus acts upon its art goals of reconciliation and love among all people of the world.

The most significant element in Plexus is that its events by itself are actions of reconciliation in reality and not just theoretical statements. What they are about is to bring people together of various cultures with different ways of life under one roof so we can experience that we are one.

Plexus has its own way to achieve this reconciliation goal through art and to bring philosophy in practice, this is way the events in Plexus are more important than the theory of it. Without them, Plexus remained just as an idea.

From an unpublished paper *Plexus Magic Box*, New York, June 1994.

The Plexus Magic Box is a multi-cultural event. The box which eventually became the Magic Box was given to me to use in an artwork of my choice by a friend who is a known world traveller who had brought the box all the way from Asia to New York City. It sat empty for two years amongst a vast variety of objects one amasses as a constructionist and collage artist. Waiting until one day when in conversation with Dr. Dernini the idea arose to construct a “Magic Box” to represent Plexus. I had been working on a series of magic boxes for five years. All in their own way representing an aspect of the inner journey, exactly what the world of Plexus represented to me. Through Dr. Dernini’s great passion for Plexus, in time I came to understand much of the formation and on-going concepts of Plexus as well as Dr. Dernini’s vision for the future accomplishments he hoped Plexus would achieve. These many conversations formed the “material” I used to create the Plexus Magic Box 1. As you study the box you will recognising that you are looking at a Plexus universe made up of memorabilia from Plexus events as well as material metaphors for the artistic and spiritual journey we are all undertaking on some level.

Here lies my reason for placing Swami Muktananda, one of the greatest spiritual leaders of the last half of the twenty century, at the pinnacle of this boxed universe. He is there, as he was here, for one reason which is to remind us of our own nature and that we are in truth one.

It is my clear understanding that this is also the message that Dr. Dernini, through Plexus, has put into action by endeavouring to “heal and reconcile” all cultures through the common denomination of art.

Fabrizio Bertuccioli

Written recollection made in Rome, in July of 1994

On my participation in PLEXUS International

I had just started again to work very heavily in the field of visual arts and I was trying to create a group of artists gathered around the same operative lines, that is: liberation of artists from the cage of the art market, direct taking over of the 'intellectual' responsibility for one's own work, re-establishing of a link between art and culture (rather than the consumer-like attitude of the star system), 're-invention of the locations of art', and the making in the first person. I was working on a wide area making use of various channels and especially involving those artists who, though very good and lively, had no place inside the 'official' circles. In 1986, together with a quite large group of artists which called itself 'Magazzini Generali' (Bonded Warehouse), I was organizing the 'Project Against Apartheid', when we received, through the connections established during the task at hand, namely through Dr. Sandro Dernini, the invitation to participate in the PLEXUS event 'Il serpente di Pietra' (The stone snake), which was to take place in Sardinia. Among the working papers sent from New York, I found enclosed some pages from the 'Fire' magazine, published in the U.S.A. around the twenties, which I found to be of great interest with respect to the problems of contemporary artists, and very close to the spirit of our own operation. Therefore, I decided to participate in 'The stone snake' event, i.e. four days of art and science, The international market of art slaves (Gavoi, July 1987).

From the first PLEXUS papers I read and the first meetings with people involved in it, I realized that, according to me, this project is very much on the same line of what we are trying to do, offering, in addition, wider and structurally more advanced operative conditions, relying on an already developed international global strategy, with its own history, and with passwords synthesizing concepts which are essential for the freedom to express, research, and communicate. I realized that working together with PLEXUS could give us the possibility to give voice to a force capable, if not of solving, at least of raising the problem of a different relationship between art and society, thus re-negotiating 'the art contract'. Moreover, PLEXUS gives us the advantage of tools such as the 'art co-opera', which enables artists and scientists from different places and with different backgrounds to contact each other for a limited period of time in creative situations with the aim of producing a tangible result. This promotes a high-level interaction from which new life sparks, new seeds and new fruits are born to the advantage of a re-discovered 'International Community' of artists in the first person.

These are, in short, the reflections which led to my active participation and first-person initiative in the PLEXUS project (see papers, events, and works produced).

I must say, however, that in the course of time I've often had reasons to consider some risks connected to the PLEXUS internal dynamics, which, in fact, often shows the same negative trends against which the whole project had initially came into being: that is, repeated tendencies to turn the project to personal, egoistic advantage, and mean power games resulting in the fact that happenings originally created by PLEXUS have wound up appearing under a different label (often that of some Establishment institution); all things which clearly emerge from a careful inspection of the documents. The worst thing, however, is the persistence of a discriminatory attitude towards artists, who are often relegated to an accessory, ornamental role in the context of the most relevant happenings. This emerges clearly from

the fact that artists have no access to the economical budget and have to participate at their own expense, while, on the contrary, other participants - whether professors, scientists, intellectuals, managers, or representatives of this or that institution - come to carry on their businesses at the organization's expense. I won't, however, attempt any analysis or de-construction of what PLEXUS has produced in the recent years, this task being up to researchers in fields different from mine (critics, historians). My concern is art making, with the consciousness that this will become increasingly difficult insofar as the snake keeps biting its own tail.

Translation by the author of his paper in Plexus International Manifesto Chiamata Aperta per gli Schiavi dell'Arte (Open Call for the Slaves of Art), made by Bertuccioli, Rome, June 1988.

The Artist in the First Person,

The creation of autonomous organisms of artists who are producers in the first person of their works is one of current research project pursued by the artistic movement and the international "community" of artists in the everyday organization of their work (see PLEXUS and the informal autonomous movements working in various countries).

Withdrawing in order to exchange

The social composition of a freely composed world is a behavioural 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.

This is the work engaged in by artists as utopian producers of the "gratuitous," a work for which too often they have to pay the price. To deny marginality as a chance for enriching the exchange between those heterogeneous who withdraw from the dominant homogeneous, to propose an attitude toward the programming and production of projects which actually amount to denying the chance itself, is a crime against freedom and against a freely composed world, before than a crime against creativity and art. Reinventing the locations of art is an operative element in this marginality. When one sees a piece of art in a place that is already "valorized," in a place already assigned to art, everything one sees acquires "authority," becomes important, and exchange becomes impossible. When, instead, one sees it simply just like that, in an ordinary place, without the prop of the 'appropriate' place and surroundings, one finds it easier to criticize, one is forced into a relationship with it. It is the capacity to perceive normality as opposed to the expectation of an extraordinary event, which, in most the cases, is just a prefabricated display.

The production of use value consists in the attribution of sense to the world of signs and objects which man produces for man (play).

Art is where it is, not what it is.

Why is man an exemplary citizen as long as he lives in noise, but becomes a rebel as soon as he sets about listening to himself?

The live TV news becomes the only acknowledged reality in the world.

The individual must make himself fitting and predictable if he hopes for a place in a world where every fantasy has found its justification.

An event is accepted only if its presentation cancels the risks that preceded it.

Since art in itself is experiment and research, it is the attest way to experiment and research in any field (it is the natural place for such activities).

The artist as research scientist must become the critic of fame.

Artistic production must be capable of doing away with 'the opposition between wealth and poverty,' the opposition between the abstract and the concrete in the human condition.

Whoever engages in art-making has to adopt toward the present time the attitude implied by the concept of the artistic work's gratuitousness. Art is the "need to exercise humanity" without hoping for fame, without falling into worry about the future and into anxiety to succeed, to grow attached to a piece of work, to suffer the limitations of reason, to lose sight of life.

An attitude of gratuitous expense is the first form taken by the imagination of wealth, its source, while giving up living, storing, and saving up are its contrary.

The artist today mustn't work for the 'art business' only, mustn't make use of his imagination only in the making of his work. He has to use it also in his everyday life, determining new relationships which are coherent with his spirit, with his inner life, thus accepting other people's creative energies as well as his own. Only starting from a way of making which is not ruled by the laws of the production of goods, which is beyond the condition imposed by a culture that models every human activity on economy, and that on this model has moulded every form of production, invention, communication, socialization, and formation of personal identity, only starting from a way of making which is gratuitous from the point of view of these laws it will become possible to re-invent the 'location of art.' Only starting from this condition it will become possible to identify a new wealth which is unity inside the person between bodily and spiritual being and unity among people, and to imagine the life of a society which is free from fear and freely composed. Then, maybe, something will be born that we could feel like calling art.

It is thus necessary that artists, 'withdrawing,' work in first person as producers of themselves and of their own projects, grouping themselves into a society in which each artist is present with his own identity, his own credit line, and his own product, giving body to the heterogeneous which invites dialogue with the homogeneous (which would like art to be industrial production and the artist a follower of orders: star system) on the results of the ongoing and ever changing research, thus setting in motion a dynamics of behaviours and relationships from which new life sparks. It would be the first time in history that the homogeneous and the heterogeneous were not in a relationship of conflict, of mutual elimination, and everything deriving from that, and this is valid and extendible to all fields where those human relations operate which determine the life of society.

If this were to happen, historically it would amount to the end of the civilization of barbarism, the extinction of the sense of guilt, the disappearance of the fear of being like what one rejects, which is often identified, in fact, with the heterogeneous.

This is today the historic task of artists in the first person and of those who have been able to keep alive and foster the being, and who have had the luck not to mistake it with the having.

In this spirit came into being a Plexus photo event by the international community of artists in the first person working in New York, Amsterdam, Paris, Rome, Cagliari, Dakar, to further freedom of association and expression for the international community of art.

### David Boyle

Unpublished paper *La Scatola Nera* (Black Box), Rome, 1989.

At the finish of July we commence a comforting phase of auto-analysis that is 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. By utilizing the metaphor of planetary mass we could understand the evacuation of the most heavy elements from the core of the body (mass) results in an instability that necessitates a collapse of the body to re-establish the core mass. Rather than to wrack the body of this movement with such a change of structure, we have intervened to freeze the movement in time through the use of ritual documentation. The core group is stabilized by this action.

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.

### Gaetano Brundu

Transcript of the Italian written recollection made by him in Cagliari, in July-August 1994.

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 rutter 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 in the defining the destiny and identity of Plexus.

I believe that I have already said in the letter to Mazzarelli made in May 1992:

Plexus can be charatherized and have its originality, in the very system of art it has been so often excluded from because of the lack of the responsibility of some of the players or by choice, or anyway objective placement; characterized by its diversity.

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 maight 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.

If I have to make a reference for Plexus about the problematics of contemporary art, I wouldn't even know which components to exatcly mention. We could speak about "Ephemeral Art," Narrative Art ; but also visionary sensibility, that is a charaterization that is not only contemporary. In the history of Plexus there is a lot of Conceptual Art but it is only a component part.

And so: what can we connect the metaphor of Plexus Art Cooperas and of other events? to the Carneval in Rio? Or furthermore: what sense does it have to attribute, to what connect the frequent jumps of sloppy and irrational acts, at the limits of craziness? to the first Dada?

Plexus produces the event but produces also the object, that which in the Storage we called relics.

Certainly Plexus has been quite inclined towards " the event;" charaterized by ( it seems to me) escape from reason by some of the players.

Lively dialectics, therefore, between program and unleashed fantasy or anyway not disciplined, free fantasy in a way from potential rules and methodological rigors conditioning its program and selfdisciplin.

What preveals in my works? I think that I sway to find an equilibrium between my various personal experiences, a kind a virtual synthesis outside single episodes. But could it or should it be a kind of virtual thing, a thing which was only mine and that can not be communicated easily. In my work there is the object - the drawings, but also little white pieces of papers, there was the concept - "The Mystery of Interleukine 2", "the Ghost of Liberty", the event - installations, but rarely actions. I have also a global perception of these experiences, and I did not live them as comparisons and irreconcilables, admitted that this reconciliation was a problem. There was some need of mediating, there was so to survive that moment of a deep subjective equilibrium, that idea and that sinthesis that rest inside of me; and I did not know how to define differently.

Anyway, to know if and how Plexus would confronted itself with the particular problem of contemporary art, for me up till now wasn't a question that concerned me. It is a problem, I wish to say that for the moment I put it in parenthesis. Now I see it like a lazy game with labels. Personally I am not interested in looking for or finding feedbacks. I have been interested and still am interested in establishing a relationship between my work and my globality as an artist in the first person and this

open situation, magmatics, as if I had in front of me an identity to inseminate. I am interested in this projection toward the future, toward the creation of something that did not exist before in the system of art. But to define it is like killing it.

I thought, and I think to be able to contribute by giving a soul to this collective process by bringing my story inside, the story of my 30 year relationship with the system of art.

So do not think that the moment has come to look for feedbacks and definitions in particular categories and tendencies. This is at least my position today. Maybe it is too subjective, but I believe that it may fit into a program.

You speak of a sinking. After years of happy and uncounscious sailing, it was inevitable that the ship of fools would crash against some rocks or paradoxically would go down in a calm sea. It doesn't seem that this ship at the level of unconsciousness has come across many of the problematics which dominate the system of art today. Certainly, there were be also some convergences, objective not conscious.

This uncounsciousness could have constituted its salvation up to the point of going down but sinking is not sinking, but a renewal and a regeneration. The ship of fools is like "l'Araba Fenice."

But you can say that the uncounsciousness, the ignorance of the rocks has consolidated the non existence of the rocks, therefore, "The Zen and of the art of not sinking," it is a book that hasn't been written yet. can Plexus write it?

Regarding the serie dedicated to the molecular image of Interleukine 2 I believe necessary an introduction. An introduction which began in 1962, when my first work from the serie of "Leoni" was made. It was in this work where for the first time that emblem now known as "Baffo" (moustache) of the lion, by Brundu) still present today in my work. In that "Leone I" from 1962 ( oil on canvas, kept at the Institute of Art History in the Letters School, University of Cagliari) in the center of the snout there was a kind of little anchor or vague phallic symbol. The work depicts a lion's head and originated from a gesture, a quick brush of color in which I made in a moment of "improvisation." Do you see? we come back to that which could have taught us Jazz: the role of improvisation in the genesis of the work of art.

I thought that have expressed in that painting the sign of a pregerminal force, the essence of vitality. In those years I was already aware of the problematics related to psychoanalysis, I saw my product was solidly anchored in Freudian dream symbols.

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 montly 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.

It began like that in 1986 my serie of copy art that you know and that in part you felt to use for your research. The image of that model of IL2 I have put next that of my "baffo," they have interacted in various ways in my pages, cm 30x21, the same dimensions, the same kind of little pieces of papers used for the installations, using combinations, and successive reductions, games of collage and added marks. The general title of my operation was the same title of the article of "La Recherche:" Les Messangers de l'Immunit .

I was intrigued enough by those images very similar to mine, "il baffo," that appears suddendly 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 intimate defence found themselves in my creative work, in my fantasy over a distance of years.

From another 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 “baffo” and the systematic methodology of scientific research that brought me the “plausible” model of that molecule.

So my problem, as an artist in the first person, a solitary artist but a careful one, (so I believe), to what was happening in the world, in that of effects and of dreams, particularly in that of science that in certain moments I do not know in which part to connect myself, between reality and fantasy.

The problem tied to the mystery of genesis of forms, but also of a questioning of its subtle links to life that unify in time and space, aspects and ways of the existing which usually look without any connections between them.

Naturally, as artist, neither this time did I feel bound to illustrate a theorem or some laws given prior or outside from my specific creativity; I was interested to go ahead with a process, an artistic process without even knowing the outcome. In this process intervened my way, also technical, to be an artist, the formal consolidated and fine games made over ten years above all through drawings, the consciousness of my particular collocation within the system of art. As an example of a drawing I can remember that “Flight and Flights” that you know well because in 1976? we used for the poster of the concert of Scelsi that you organized at Spazio A.

Therefore those two images, il “baffo” and IL2 interacted in the context of my drawing, and those marks derived from the quick gesture, from the sense of space that put in act familiar dynamics to me; they interacted with my history as an artist and with the intent of creating works of art, of constructing a new universe, of rhythms, of forms and sensibility.

English translation by the author of his paper *For Plexus*, published in *Passport for Plexus Serpent*, Cagliari, Celt Edition, 1987.

The artists and intellectuals' cosmopolitanism is an ancient aspiration often mortified by poverty, by tiredness, by mistrust in humanity and by the melancholic condition of those who live in islands and little islands. And yet the planet is today really a village.

Communication networks more and more are becoming frequent and punctual: making to circulate our own ideas, our dreams, even in shape of work of art, of proposal, of questioning, is today virtually easy and speedy. So, for artists in the first person, Plexus may become the net of which we little in despair far inhabitants of islands can vibrate the yarns for radiate our creative messages, in hope that such messages don't get lost in a desert of indifference.

Plexus may become an important opportunity for those who feel themselves somehow creative and, as artists in the first person, feel the need to throw their message to this net; message that is going to be much more than a bottle entrusted to the ocean streams.

From the art exhibition announcement *Plexus Storage Calls NYC*, Cagliari, 1992.

The Third Plexus International Storage installation, *Storage Calls NYC*, opened June 13, 1992, will end September 15. It is an operation in progress: begun with objects by George Chaikin, Ivan Dalla Tana, David Boyle, Alfa Diallo, Leonard Horowitz, Lorenzo Pace, Rolando Politi and Barnaby Ruhe, it

is gone on with insert of Carol Black, Nilde Cortez, Steven Di Lauro, Ralston Farina, Ray Kelly, Arturo Lindsay, Patricia Parker, William Parker, Wess Power, José Rodriguez and others.

This call on New York City precedes fourth installation, Multiples, by Antonello Dessì and follows Plexus Impriting, A Story by Anna Saba; first installation of the Storage was Opening, fitted by Fabrizio Bertuccioli, Piero Cianflone, Ciro Ciriaco and Sandro Dernini.

This Act Three, of which I assume the whole responsibility, may be the first in a line of call other Plexonian centers: but New York is New York, it is a little the mother house, a house who is imaginary of homeless to, virtual as some artistic reality and our own existential reality, virtual, is more real than real. This call NYC is recall, is the continuity of a poetic dialogue living for several years, it founds on some objects produced by plexonians of New York, relics of Plexus history. From those objects and from their interaction with other relics kept in the Storage, originates a production of images, poetic tensions in a ephemeral and virtual space, built at the moment in the view finder of the reflex; so the photographs constitute the work of art, the work produced by theirs installation of the Storage.

In side of decayed and entangled space of San Francesco al Corso in Cagliari, ideally struggling with barbarous and barbaric intrusions of the present and past, struggling with darkness and profusely laid down entropy will, the relics of some stories happened in NYC during memorable evenings, suggest new adventures for creative fancy, another trip amongst thousand real and virtual trips that are possible on the yarn of Plexus network, net that vibrates in known and known canvasses, from the more subtle, rational and lucid to the craziest and ricketiest.

### George Chaikin

Transcript of the interview made at Angiola Churchill's loft, New York, November 1994.

It is difficult for collaborative art group endeavours to have space in old traditional exhibitions where only one person get usually credit as the creator. Recently there is a move towards more democratic forms where all people are participating in the making decisions process.

My initial understanding of Plexus Black Box through my participation, made by the art work, the Haddamard Matrix retina, a device for image compression, for reducing information, was to facilitate face to face communications among artists all over the world. Then I realized that my art work in Plexus were used by other artists, like Gaetano Brundu and Maria Grazia Medda, as a foundation for the growing of collaborative development.

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. My participation was made not under any hierarchy, because it switches always in time and space. I believed that I never was a key player. 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. Sometimes I did not know what and why something was happening but, later on, it made sense. The Plexus process is a non linear activity and is less rational, in which the coherence appears only after the fact. After my experience over the years I know that there is not a need to get every "i" dotted and cross every "t" in terms of understanding it. This is because you will understand it only after you let yourself participate in it.

In Plexus the question of the balance between leadership and democracy was not relevant, and I believe myself to be a profoundly democratic person. I believe also that Plexus is a coherent democratic structure because it has not a hierarchic structure. Sandro covers his role of orchestrating it on a basis of a democratic participation.

Everybody has his/her own point view and with different art forms in which not everybody is interested in it.

Plexus Black Box was an attempt to document the history of Plexus.

My relationship with Plexus started in 1985 on the occasion of the memorial for the death of Ralston Farina, a performing artist.

Through Willoughby Sharp I met Plexus in that occasion at CUANDO. Time was gravity for Ralston holding him down. The concept of "time-art" was that art was related to time.

In 1985 I showed at CUANDO a large copy of the Haddamard Matrix dedicated to Ralston; in 1986 I started the mass-production of 1000 copies of it to be distributed to the audience at CUANDO through the air fan of Ralston.

In 1987 I produced an interactive telecommunication art event with Willoughby Sharp. In the same year I participated in the Symposium on the Dematerialization of Art, held at NYU-Icasa where I produced several hundred copies of my Haddamard Matrix drawing and distributed them by leaving them on the chairs of the audience. A journalist, from the audience asked to me why it was art, when it was not looked at like it was expected to be, in some customary way.

In 1988 I faxed it from NYU to Sardinia. Most of what I did was engaged with the memory of Ralston Farina and to mechanisms of perception.

I am interested in studies on aesthetic perception and divine proportion. The ultimate objective of my participation in Plexus was to facilitate communications among people, and I started to realize how I could use my model of vision, based on the sunflower model, to reduce a great quantity of information in the process of telecommunication broadcasting.

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 a 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.

### Sandro Dernini

Transcript from "*Cultural Navigation and Community: The Lower East Side*," the first round table of the Summer Institute of Living Traditions of New York University, Barney Building, Summer 1993.

De Leon: Sandro, when you came to New York from Italy, you blended long time after everybody-else landed, when you landed, you came to Lower East Side. How did you plug in the artistic vibes of the Lower East Side?

Sandro: My story was that in 1981 I moved in the Lower East Side, looking for a cheap apartment. I didn't know anything about how rich culturally was the community, because as Italian, I was related to SOHO, I was more related to Chelsea where Plexus was originally in Chelsea. And because of its cultural activities there Plexus ended on the street.

The only place where I got hospitality was in the Lower East Side, in a basement of a burned building, a really incredible gathering artists place, where I discovered the community.

I see here many artists that they came from the basement, from The Shuttle Theatre. One dollar to get in, very tough to get in, because, we didn't want too many limousines outside on the street, because we should get in trouble with the Fire Department.

At the Shuttle Theatre there was really an art audience, made by the same artists who were playing.

Then I discovered what means to be in Lower East Side. Because I was lucky, I was lucky to have big mama as Ms. Sarah Farley, now she is dead. She was a community leader of the homesteaders in the Lower East Side where there was a large quantity land with burned buildings that the community people, for their survival, was trying to recover, always in big fight with the Mayor Koch. She always stated that land was belonging to the people.

“People have the right to live”, she usually used to say.

In this way I discovered the Lower East Side Community and how was so connected culturally. That brought to me to understand my roots and what means to defend your own traditions. Lower East Side isn't just a place for old or new immigrants. There was very rich, may be the richest, place culturally in New York. This is my relationship with Lower East Side. Culturally, very rich people.

DeLeon: How did you tie to the artistic tradition here?

Sandro: This is the story, my background is basically Avant-Garde and Jazz. Jazz was for us Avant-Garde and Jazz is Poetry. And of course as soon I turned on this side I met William Parker, Miguel Algarin and Micky Pinero.

It was the time, 1984, when we made a call “In Order to Survive” all together in unity we made a call from the East 6th Street. Today we're recalling our history: on December 10th 1992, in the morning of the Human Right Day we met with Dennis deLeon at City Hall. In the evening, we're here in this same auditorium, with many others, recalling the community call “In order to Survive,” because that was and is a crucial time, it was like now, there was no money, there was only art. Art is art relationship with the community. I saw many galleries coming Lower East Side, gentrifying the place. I saw NYU as a gentrification entity, I see now also how NYU, specially with this building Barney Building, and this art department, have an incredible opportunity to show our rich is the artistic and cultural scene of the Lower East Side.

I would like to make a point. Here I am as coordinator of the Well Being project, I just came back from Italy, what we have here is very positive attempt. Every scene is moving finally to bridge the community and the institution to be committed to work together in the direction of well- being and reconciliation project.

There is a calendar, program of activities that goes back to the first appointment, behind this first round table of NYU, at Nuyorican Poet Cafe.

We are planning a series of important activities called “The Repatriation of Art Into Community” The first was done within a collaboration between The Nuyorican Poets Cafe and Museum Modern Art of New York. Art must stay in the community, in the streets. The street is a beautiful incredible art space, so rich that you can go in the street and set-up a street show. We have a very rich art scene in the Lower East Side....

Basically here on the table there is some kind of strategy. In the bottom of the flyer, the focus of the institute will be on "Community-based collaborative efforts to devise urban art education strategies." We had a meeting in David's office and the discussion was on strategies or means. Let's go back to strategies. In this case, it is very crucial to get a picture of the community, of the environment that really is not wealth. There are a lot of problems in the community. And the subtitle of "Cultural Navigation and Community" is "Art, Reconciliation and Well-Being." We know that recently on the New York Times there was an article about how the economic wealth measurement was modified by the presence of human rights and quality of life, that's called well-being. We're years working now in the direction of reconciliation and well-being, trying to understand the role of art and in this case the role of this department.

Because of this department and of this building there are some sub potential results. They could be really used in the community, and the community can start exchanges with NYU, let's say by starting with this Summer Program of the Department of Art and Art Professions.

I spoke briefly before that I left for Italy, as coordinator of the organizative committee of the Well Being project. I know that it is possible to develop in a concrete way some international collaborations. In this Round Table, we have the Nuyorican Poet Cafe and Miguel, with an incredible place. It is really incredible to go there.

Now what is reconciliation? Reconciliation has a big and incredible value, we have to start to develop in the community the framework for this diversity on which can exist reconciliation. Diversity is prevarication sometimes. "I'm different from you," "You are stranger to me."

If we are able to use art to create a reconcile environment to develop the well-being we will save money for the City, and because now everything is economic, we need a framework, not so much relate to art production but more related to the development of a curriculum in Multicultural Art Education. The community people don't have time, resources and skills to articulate it. We are under the survival pressure. We can't wait too much.

The Third Round Table that will end this Summer Institute will deal with the issue of Art Urban Education.

If we will able then to develop a team to articulate the curriculum and the working project then there are more entities in the community that will, maybe, enjoy us.

I am sure that CUANDO will join and supply what is identified in the general plan. This is a very complex plan.

DeLeon: Also the idea we want is outside governments or public agencies, we don't want to depend on from them. That is your point Miguel, we don't want to grow sole in government constantly. The government shouldn't be on our way.

Sandro: Let's say we should be able to understand how this Reconciliation Well Being Project has to be between institutions and community.

Unpublished paper "*Sgusi Kunto Kosta Plexus?* (I beg your pardon, how much cost Plexus?). Open Letters between Artists and Scientists", Cagliari, May 1991, translation in English by the researcher.

May 31, 1991, travelling towards Carloforte.

Dear Franco,

"Sgusi Kunto Kosta?" (I beg your pardon, how much cost?) Plexus Art?

The cause was Plexus Black Box.

The result was Plexus additional value.

“Sgusi Kunto Kosta Plexus Black Box?” (I beg your pardon, how much cost Plexus Black Box?) and which is the emotional and economic cost of Plexus in the contribution of the establishment of the 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium and of the various Committees and Centers under development?

If I interrupted you while you were talking, and I am sorry about it, it was because first for my emotions in this particular time, but specially for my urgent need “In Order To Survive” to clarify publicly the economic, scientific and artistic values of the planned event of July 4, 1991, with enough quantity and quality of information to allow an optimal take off for the Elisabeth project and for its necessary funds-raising.

In the middle of my interruption to you, Silvano Tagliagambe in a puzzled way, asked to me which was the additional value that I was speaking about.

Thanks to these breaks off or intermissions we started finally to introduce the concept of value, additional in this case, in reference to Plexus.

“Plexus Passport n°2” could become the vehicle to continue our open letters, to clarify the historical additional value that Plexus gained. It could serve to inform the Community without too much noise of the trajectory that “The Serpent” is following in reference to “what is the case,” “what could be the case,” and “what should be the case” of Plexus Black Box.

“Sgusi Kunto Kosta” Plexus today after Gavoi, after the dressing event of the Elisabeth, after the delivery in Gorée of the first lot of art works?

“Sgusi Kunto Kosterà” (I beg your pardon, how much will cost) to set down under the sea Plexus Black Box on July 4, 1991, in Carloforte? and How much will cost this quantity and quality of art?

“Fire!!” this is the key word today, before and after Gavoi.

On May 30, 1991, “In Order To Survive” was again the message, and if I interrupted you, it was not because I did not like the house’s wine, but for my friendly relationship with you built on the work made together in all these years.

“Sgusi Kunto Kosta Plexus?”

It has not price. But it has an additional value which can be estimated year by year. Which is the value of Plexus will be a question that will be asked soon at different levels;

The additional value will be clarified within this historical contemporary context, from the China’s events, Saddam, Noriega, to the world marketing control for the 1992 Columbus event.

What is the additional value of the first lot of artworks plus the second lot collected by Plexus in direction of the opening in Gorée of an World Art Fund for the survival of the Living Traditions in Art in risk of extinction?

One plus One equals Two.

This does not apply to Plexus. In Plexus One plus One are synergetic and they create an causal interaction producing an additional value.

Plexus is synergetic, it is living matter. But this is another story, look at “Physics of the Matter,” “Aesthetics,” and “Cybernetics.”

One plus One equals History of Art, which Art? Plexus Art!

How the value of an art work is made?

The cultural value is given by a basic economic law of demand and supply.

The exchange value is modified by speculative operations of collectors and dealers who invest on that particular artist or, better, art movement. It gives more speculative opportunities in order to swell up the exchange of prices.

“Il Cambio di Rotta” (The Change of Route) for Plexus could be to sum its cultural value with a new exchange value. For example, through limited editions of art works, “Plexus Money,” “Plexus Stamps,” “Plexus Certified Checks.” For such purpose it is necessary to switch the exchange route with the market.

Instead to be collectors and dealers to speculate on artists, Plexus should choose and invest on collectors and dealers like Franco Girina, who in the first person historically believed in Plexus, without speculations, in order then that they will turn to the market their additional values, made artificially - scientifically.

How much is the value today of the art works given in 1987 to the collector Girina as value exchange to print the “Passport for Plexus Serpent”? Surely more than before.

One plus One equals to?

The photos of the installation made on November 9th, 1990, at Anna Saba’s studio, with “La Treccia di Gavoi” by Micaela Serino, are still present in my memory, together with the intelligent exchange of eyes between us following our images game, built for the continuation of the historical ongoing travelling within the Plexus Black Box.

But what is the value of emotions and information, compressed in that installation? It was supposed to become permanent, finalized to a journey towards the new challenge of “Plexus Passport n°2”, in order to document the activities made after Gavoi, and before from 1982 to 1990.

“Plexus Black Box”, set down under the sea, will serve to give a significant signal for an acknowledgement of this additional economic and artistic value to Plexus that is defending so hardly for the artist in the first person, who made possible One plus one equals History, and for the establishment of an credit line for the International Art Community of Plexus.

It is because of the setting down under the sea of “Plexus Black Box” that this intermission born, not attended.

Franco, as David Ecker wrote to you in the already historical letter on January 10, 1990, “let’s play with Plexus Black Box and bring all us to the enlightenment.” Bring your Serpent and Nur will win.

Anyway you were right about to not brake off. We loose in quality for the need of quantity. I hope that we could continue to deal with this dilemma in Vienna.

Yours, Plexus 23s.

Paper “*The Artist in the First Person*,” published in Passport for Plexus Serpent, Cagliari, Celt Edition, 1987.

160 artists of 23 different nationalities, that on July 4, 1987 arrived in the sanctuary of Sa Itria in Sardinia, were the real protagonists ‘in the first person’ of Plexus art co-opera n° 4, Il Serpente di Pietra.

This event was organized as the first international art slaves market show, produced and managed by the artist in the first person. It took form in the confrontation, collision, encounter between all players of this Plexus ‘challenge-game-show’ on the star system of the art market.

It was played by two teams mainly:

A) The co-authors of ‘the anti-libretto’ for an art co-opera, made as an unitary and compressed presentation of the synchronized collective deconstruction of the serpent.

B) The authors of ‘the libretto’ for an art opera as a modular and selective construction of individual art-works.

The stake was the apple of the art star system.

The supreme judge was the Serpent.

In the atelier des arts that came first and built Il Serpente di Pietra Plexus interacted with the time-space of Sa Itria, a megalithic sanctuary, ten miles far from Gavoi (a small village at the center of the island of Sardinia, Italy), and with the times-spaces of the 160 artists speaking different languages and codes. The artist in the first person became the absolute winner of this Plexus game, playing as slave and working as artist, free indeed to express itself without curators, mediators and critics.

My image of Plexus artistic director, since Plexus art slave journey started in New York in 1986, was the slaves dealer who forced time-space of individual artists as slaves of art, trying (no always successfully) to chain them into a Plexus frame of an art slave ship escaping from New York City art market control.

My task as art slaves trader as well as artistic director was to follow the needs of Plexus art slave journey for a common Plexus strategy of a marketing control of the global image of Il Serpente di Pietra as Plexus art co-opera n°4, and for its outsider perception as an unitary total theatre.

Inside Plexus there was the violence of very strong emotions, evoked by the surprising panorama around the megalithic sanctuary-stage, and produced by particular conditions in which this international auto financed journey developed and (not ended yet) arrived in Sardinia after many economic, political, artistic, technical, and personal difficulties (not easy to digest). These present difficulties caused problems, fights, separations, discussions, critic dialogues, and solidarity finally like on a real slave ship.

As in a modern rite, dedicated to Bruce Richard Nugent's Fire!! (Harlem 1926) and to the bronze mutant of my land of Sardinia, Plexus artistic director was eaten by a serpent of fire. Deliberately I burned and destroyed the image of Plexus artistic director, as previously I announced in 1986 in New York, after Eve art opera n°3, following the 'art-logic' and the 'time-art' of Plexus strategy map against the pyramid of the star art system.

There is not anymore time-space for art filters between the artist in the first person and Plexus.

Plexus is a co-authorship art venture, created, produced, and managed by the artist in the first person only.

In the end of Il Serpente di Pietra, as in an ancient rite, the ancestral messenger by Arturo Lindsay set on fire a box containing all artists's signatures.

A serpent of real fire came from the burning art box and set in fire my person just in the moment that I was burning my clothes of Plexus artistic director as in a modern sacrifice. This was not a sham metaphor.

Plexus art slave market show was not only an art nonsense, Il Serpente di Pietra was really the first international art meeting in Sardinia of so many artists, outside the conventional and official 'roads' of the international art scene, without any pope giving credibility or/and advertising such event, and outside New York City, the most compulsory and important art shipping place in the contemporary art world, and usual stage of the past Plexus events.

The presence in Sardinia of so many artists and scientists coming from so many different places free to have an open and critic dialogue with their work of art, working at the same time-space on the same subject/object (the serpent), it was a positive proof, a confirmation and support, for Plexus idea to use the metaphor of universal myths as a shuttle of multi-lateral art communication.

Thank to the Serpent, Plexus became an international art network, produced independently by the artist in the first person.



Plexus future is now responsibility only of the artist in the first person, as the winner of the art apple. Plexus artistic director now has been replaced by the invisible serpent with wings Ningki-Nangka, Plexus art co-opera n°5, the continuation of Plexus art journey towards Dakar, and towards a future richer of fantasy, freedom and equity.

The artist in the first person is now the producer of the next second phase in the global project (1985-1990) of Plexus Multi-Lateral Recall Network: the production.

Il Serpente di Pietra, following Plexus strategy, closed the first phase of promotion (1985-1987) to establish an independent international art community credit line for the artist in the first person and for Plexus art co-operas.

Plexus art slave ship can and should become an art framework to develop, during its art journey, an international cooperation between all artists as art producers to negotiate a new contract of art, made by/for the artist in the first person.

Paper *Art Slavery*, published in Passport for Plexus Serpent, Cagliari, Celt Editions, 1987.

Plexus is a framework for global art projects, its outlines of development are Plexus art co-operas, coproduced by the artist in the first person.

These global art projects are a compression of time-space, myth, science, art and relativity, in which as in a modern rite, 150-350 artists and scientists are working together, tuned in a metaphor to celebrate and deconstruct.

Plexus has coproduced three art operas: Goya's Time, New York, 1985, with the participation of 67 artists; Purgatorio Show, New York, 1985, with 350 artists; Eve, New York, 1986, with 220 artists; and one art co-opera Il Serpente di Pietra (The Serpent of Stone), Gavoi (Sardinia), Italy, 1987, with 160 artists of 23 different nationalities.

Il Serpente di Pietra, art co-opera n°4, was the continuation of the journey of an art slaves ship, travelling through reality and fantasy. During this journey Plexus has transformed artistically the ferryboat, travelling from the Italian coast to the island of Sardinia, into a Dutch slaves ship, toward Dakar (Senegal).

Then, during the Plexus art journey, the Italian ferryboat was re transformed into the ship Electra, Guglielmo Marconi's travelling laboratory. A radio signal for freedom in art communication was transmitted, to dedicate the Serpent to the Centenary (1887-1987) of Heinrich Hertz's electromagnetic proof, which materialized the invisible and revolutionised our daily controlled electronic living. Since 1982 in New York Plexus has developed a continuous activity in the field of interdisciplinary art research.

Since 1985 it has focused its interest on the interaction between art and science, to produce Plexus art co-opera as a synchronized presentation of art & science concept-images.

Plexus art co-opera has its roots in total theatre, jazz, international art fairs, scientific laboratories, happenings, Fluxus, and in the history of modern art.

Plexus brainstorms universal metaphors like The Serpent. Plexus uses metaphors to create common ground between artists and scientists from various cultures with different values. Plexus uses all available art fields that interact synchronously among themselves and the relative time-space of each art co-opera.

A Plexus atelier comes first and builds these art shows, through a brainstorm made by 'time-art' and 'art-logic' that tunes in the metaphor in deconstruction (the Serpent) all artists.

From the megalithic sanctuary of Sa Itria (Gavoi) Il Serpente di Pietra has linked scientists and artists from many different part of the world, from Kassel to Sidney, Montreal, Wien, Wales, through a computer network of European and American universities, organised by the Dax (Digital Art Exchange) Group of Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh and the Department of Physics of the State University of Cagliari (Sardinia).

Plexus will continue the journey of the art slaves ship towards Dakar, where in the past from the island of Goree the first slaves ships left. There Plexus will present Plexus art co-opera n°5, the invisible African Serpent Ningki-Nangka, to start again its art journey, taking the artists not any longer slaves to a new art world in freedom.

In 1988 Plexus will dedicate the continuation of the journey of Plexus art ship to the centenary of the rotator electromagnetic fields by Nicolay Tesla (1888-1988), as a metaphor to celebrate the freedom for the artist in the first person to join the international art community.

Paper "*The Metaphor as a Travelling Factory*", published in Passport for Plexus Serpent, Cagliari, Celt Editions, 1987.

The metaphoric language of art can be used efficaciously as an international and interdisciplinary system for a more qualified information and education if synchronized with modern science and coloured with universal myths.

Plexus art co-opera uses the metaphor as a multi-category framework, as a crossing over between knowledge and unconsciousness.

Plexus uses mythology artistically with metaphoric references to science and marketing that modernizes the myth as a 'commodity symbol.'

The metaphor is an ultra-rapid integrated communication system.

Plexus art co-opera has specific forms in relation to the geo-political conditions in which it is produced, and the artist in the first person is not only the producer but also the consumer and the final product in the of this modern rite.

In Plexus art co-opera n°3 Eve, the artists, as slaves to be sold in public auction to the art market, were handcuffed together with their art works on board the art slaves ship, to underline that for them there is no separation between artist, art, and art community. It was to protest against the dynamics of the art market, imposing production mechanisms coming from the general market that are not those of art.

Through critics, dealers, gallerists, mediators and other filters the image of 'the artist in the third person' has been created, to respect the needs of the star system, the hierarchic structure is more functional to the marketing control that is governing the world market of the contemporary age.

Art should not be considered only an exclusive 'commodity symbol' for commercial trade, but a 'food' for our nourishment, a compression of high 'know how,' not exclusive, not expensive, to fly with our bodymachine outside limits and borders of rational worlds and controlled markets.

The metaphor is an ultra-rapid integrated communication system. It works with nanoseconds (billionths of a second), the time-scale with which today our logic computers are operating. One nanosecond is so fast that it exists before its rational thought. The metaphoric language of art can let us cross the boundaries of specialistic fields, working by concatenated structures. Time-space, art, science, history, can only be compressed in a continuum in evolution, never consumed, only imperfectly perceived through their developments and jumps of discontinuity, as a serpent eating its tail

act as selfnourishment, which does not disappear consuming itself, but transforms itself continuously, recycling its matter.

Official history with its ages and schools is not the measure of reality. The human being has modified with culture the rules of history, of its own natural evolution. To know the future is also to look back to the past, to arrive at the sources of our common roots, where the game of the metaphor can contain the memory of our lost ancestors.

The metaphor of art can help us to see beyond the optical and rational horizon, Plexus can be considered as a mutant following its sociobiological evolution as a dolphin, member of our common class of mammalian that sees by means of its bio-electromagnetic sonar.

Not understanding and not accepting our common nature, and at the same time diversity, created an antagonism that took root in all different levels of our everyday life individually and collectively. The loss of freedom for the diversity to cohabit with the homogeneous more organized majority has been the cause of conflicts between different worlds, with the continuous attempt at predominance by one identity over the other: the stronger over the weaker, the more rational over the less or arational, the white over the black or red, the richer over the poorer and Adam over Eve. Against this antagonism the pluralism of the Serpent metaphor has been deconstructed by Plexus to defend Human Rights against any discrimination, selection, racism and Apartheid.

In Plexus, in which the artist in the first person coexists as an individual system with other systems, there is a common patrimony which is shared collectively, and the artist has to be aware of the inter dependability of each in the modular construction of Plexus art co-opera.

Therefore Plexus art co-opera as an art project is consumed by human beings (artists and audience) and this consumption causes cultural and physiological reactions effecting their metabolism, and interacting between them and interlacing with the biocultural evolution. There is always an interaction between culture and nature. May be art is the gene 'nonsense' of our genetic evolution and Plexus can be the image of a researcher of the invisible, where however the invisible is a word and a world of modern science.

The metaphor for its pluralistic interpretations is used by Plexus project as the 'travelling factory' for its multi-lateral recall products.

Plexus uses rational and a-rational methodologies in a coloured framework of global vision and relativity to try to discover in which panorama the art co-opera, at the same time object and subject, is moving.

For the 90's Plexus art co-opera should be considered as an materialized metaphor, and art should be produced, consumed and loved as a dematerialized food to recall our ancestral memory.

Paper "*Plexus Multi-Lateral Recall Network Project, 1985-1990,*" published in Passport for Plexus Serpent, Cagliari, Celt Editions, 1987.

The Webster Dictionary defines Plexus as a structure in the form of a network; as a network of interlacing blood vessels or nerves.

Plexus is a six years international art project (1985-1990), to develop a multi-lateral recall network, produced by the artist in the first person.

"The artist in the first person" is the author and producer of its own project. Artists and scientists are the partners of Plexus, as co-authors and coproducers of this co-authorship art venture, through their

individual projects, that flow together as independent productions in the global production plan of Plexus art co-opera.

Plexus will promote, by a quarterly newsletter, exchanges between the coproducers, to establish an international art community credit line for the artist in the first person and for Plexus.

The project uses the metaphor as a 'travelling factory' of concept-images to produce global art projects (Plexus art co-operas) made for the critic consumer of the material culture of the 90's.

Plexus project is schematically divided by integrated phases of marketing mix: promotion, production, price, replacement, within short (1985-87), medium (1988), and long terms (1989-90).

Plexus coproduction structure, always in evolution, is represented in the Plexus strategy map as a truncate cone (the ancient nuraghic tower) built by the coproducers associated as in a modern rite. The participation in it is made by "art logic" and "time-art," through individual projects and independent productions.

The first level of participation for an artist is to deliver to Plexus her/his own project. This first step will allow communication with other producers through the newsletter, operating as a shuttle of Plexus brainstorm and to open a credit line on that individual project in Plexus network.

The second level is the re-elaboration of the individual and of the global project in relation to new developments born from Plexus brainstorm.

The third level is to produce the individual project as an independent production.

The fourth level is to be part of the global program, with phases of research, elaboration, actualization, interacting in the integrated concept of marketing mix for the strategic establishment of Plexus multi-lateral recall network, where recall means collection of concept-images and memory.

In order to participate at the beginning to plexus network project it is necessary to recall the following:

- participation in Plexus is made only by the delivery of a project whose the artist in the first person is the producer;
- to deliver the project/product in the time-space with the agreed deliveries of the other coproducers of the Plexus art co-opera;
- to identify the mutual goals and benefits involved in developing and establishing Plexus as an international consortium/umbrella of independent art producers;
- to avoid the bureaucratic time-space of traditional cultural organization;
- to learn to profit from the direct dialogue between artists and scientists without mediators or agents;
- to plan a Plexus calendar for the next activities of common interest;
- to learn to profit from the direct dialogue between the artist in the first person and private investors as 'angels.'

Paper "*A Plexus of Serpents*," published in the Plexus Newsletter 1988, New York, by Plexus International Art Urban Forum Inc.

Plexus is a symbiotic network born from the multi-lateral interaction of artists and scientists working together in order to survive.

The Webster New College Dictionary defines Plexus as "a network of interrelating blood vessels or nerves." A Plexus co-opera is a mixed structure of interrelating parts, organic and inorganic, concrete and abstract, rational and arational, incorporated and non incorporated. The serpent eating its tail is the Plexus metaphor for the cross-fertilization of art and science, of knowledge and the unconscious.

Since 1985, Plexus has been coproducing co-operas as synchronized presentations of art and science. Plexus taps universal metaphors such as the serpent. Plexus uses these metaphors to create common ground between artists and scientists from various cultures with different values. Plexus deconstructs and re-presents these metaphors as both artistic and scientific reality.

Plexus is committed to the proposition that all people are creative survivalists. It believes that the art/science involvement of the individual can do more to promote an environment conducive to the evolution of creativity than all the machinations of an infinite number of public agencies.

Plexus means any interaction of an interdisciplinary network ranging from fantasy and observation through discussion and reflection through demonstration and celebration and beginning again and again.

Explain it: Plexus is a metaphor for recalled memories in a framework which works within a nanosecond. It is unity by repetition and reification. The serpent is the mutant.

Paper "*Artist in the first Person: Mephistopheles*," published in the Plexus Newsletter 1988, New York, by Plexus International Art Urban Forum Inc.

The Artist in the first person is the artist qua producer, where the final product is the artist himself/herself. 'Mephistopheles' is the artist in the first person who abolishes any distinctions between art and artist. 'Mephistopheles' is also an operative tool within Plexus framework. It operates via "artlogic" rather than "rationality." "Mephistopheles" is served up by the artist in the first person as nourishment to keep ancestral art memory alive.

The artist in the third person, where the artist is defined only by reference to his/her market position and saleable commodities, is an effect of the modern

art market, a hierarchical star system based on false notions of "marketability" and "rationality." The modern art market is a sacrificial system which obliterates the artist, leaving only a product.

At the point at which art became alienated from culture and community, the artist, as artist in the third person, lost all art memory and became slave to rational considerations. The artist in the third person had to incorporate patronage, market influences and other interferences into the (inner) artistic process to stay alive. At its worst, these interferences defined the very discourse of artistic creation.

Prior to the point of the alienation of art from culture and community, the artist, as artist in the first person, was able to consume and to be consumed by his/her own culture and art in a circular dialectic. "Mephistopheles," as an art opera of the artist in the first person, delves into lost art memory. As such, it flies in the face of market pressure. It places modern technology in the hands of modern artists as a tool for artistic excavation. Both art and technology suffer from the pressures of rationality and marketability. Modern art exhibitions, driven by the need for new products, fail to provide dialogue between artists and communities from which they have grown.

Stephen DiLauro

Unpublished paper "*A Note about the Plexus Art Operas*," in PLEXUS Recall 1, Passport for Purgatorio, New York, 1986.

As a poet and showman nothing in my life to date brings such vivid and passionate recollections as the time of the Plexus art operas, "Goya Time," "Purgatorio," "Eve."

Though the names of all the artists who contributed to these productions are listed within this volume, certain individuals participated in such a big way that I feel compelled to mention them here: Lawrence "Butch" Morris, il maestro; Gretta Safferty; Anita Steckel; Cowboy Ray Kelly, captain of the art slave ship; Miguel Algarin; Lenny Horowitz; Albert DiMartino; David Boyle; Joe Strand; Paolo Buggiani; Willoughby Sharp; and Sandro Dernini, art director extraordinaire.

I have seen tempers flare, heard voices raised watched lust blossom and fade, enjoyed outstanding music, observed brilliant bursts of energy and artistic achievement and enjoyed the finished product -- spectacles that are unique in the history of opera.

One of the most amazing aspects of these operas is the extremely low budget on which they were produced. That such bursts of creative output were underwritten by a budget about the equivalent of a Trappist monk's annual wages attests to the dedication everyone involved brought to bear.

Brilliant moments and scenes leap to mind: the firing squad and clouds of smoke in "Goya Time"; the chaotic six floors of CUANDO being taken over for an artists' installation -- from the sub-basement to the top -- with the roof representing the magnificence of Paradise; the Minotaurus emerging from the art slave ship as it sailed the seas of myth and history -- the horns of the Minotaurus aflame and Eve appearing as Billie Holiday, walking Mefisto on a leash.

Now another opera is in the works -- "The Serpent." It is with more than a bit a wonderment that I approach this strange admixture again. But approach it I must -- just as the artists in these pages were compelled and attracted to our three previous operas. Onward, to Rome and the Serpent.

Article "*Plexus Opera*," published in ART WORLD Magazine, Vol.13, N.2, December 1988, Glen Head, New York

What is Plexus? This is a question I am often asked. The answer evolves as Plexus itself evolves. The "official" answer, as put forth by Dr. Sandro Dernini, founder of Plexus International, is that "Plexus is an international cartel of independent producers working in the first person." Be that as it may, Plexus at time has appeared to some observers to be no more than a series of opportunities for group photos.

For me, though, Plexus is beautiful chaos from which new names, new faces, and a new art form is emerging - the art opera. These performance spectacles are, perhaps without originally intending to be, the realization of Antonin Artaud's theories for a Theatre of Cruelty - a theatre in which masks, dance, music and shamanistic ritual take precedence over "text." As a playwright this is not the type of theatre I am moving toward. I prefer a reliance on the text, especially when the script is one I have wrote. But as an art critic, and as a man of the theatre, I find these extravaganzas fascinating. I am propelled to furthering this new art form, even though our outing here in Manhattan on November 3rd was a flopera. On New Year's Eve this year, as a prelude to our production at the Pan African Arts Festival in June 1989, Plexus will present the world's first opera in the form of a parade - The Serpent. More than two hundred and fifty artists, musicians, singers and dancers paraded through the street of the isle of Goree, Senegal, from the House of Slaves to the Kilimanjaro Club. This was Act One of a concept in which opera, theatre and fine art come together to make a new kind of show business.

Unpublished paper "*The Closing of Plexus Black Box*," New York, December 1990.

The closing of the Black Box at Teatro in Trastevere represents the end of an era. Since 1984, at the Shuttle Theater in Manhattan. I have known and worked with Doctor Sandro Dernini. Our collaboration led to spectacular theatrical art extravaganzas such as The Artificial Time of Purgatorio on the Night of No Moon, Eve, Il Viaggio del Serpente, and 1992: Cristoforo Colombo Viaggio nel Planeta Arte.

Now that the Black Box is being closed perhaps a moment of reflection is in order.

Plexus, which Dr. Dernini birthed, became a focal point for hundreds of artists in New York and elsewhere. It was a long moment in the history of theatre and art. Nothing as vibrant as these shows has ever been mounted before or since. Costumed players, orchestras, choral groups, singers, performance artists, ballets and visual artists all came together to celebrate freedom of communication. As the Plexus dramaturgh and impresario, I was repeatedly amazed at the levels of creativity and energy that went into these shows. Exploring myth and history through artistic interpretation brought to life the theories of Antonin Artaud in a manner that perhaps even he never envisioned.

Plexus art operas, or art co-operas as some called them, had a way of making the artists involved reach beyond themselves.

The creation of a new form of expression required art slaves who would execute these art operas regardless of market considerations.

But that was the 1980s. Now it is almost 1991. The art slaves have become the new masters of the art world.

On October 12, 1992, I will present an operatic art spectacle. The expression “made in the 80s for the 90s” is becoming a reality. Both Dr. Dernini and I are working to celebrate the spirit of Christopher Columbus without glossing over the historical realities that some people find repugnant.

Finally, what is any kind of opera without a diva, Sara Jackson, my wife and inspiration, is the new queen of the art opera. Without her love, encouragement, support and strength I might have given up my role as art slave without moving ahead to assume the cloak of a master. Dr. Dernini, carrying Plexus Passport 23s on La Caravella dell’Arte, has found his personal diva in Maria Pia. We are all moving ahead in life and in Art.

La luta continua!

Albert DiMartino

Unpublished paper “*Statement of Purpose*”, in PLEXUS Recall 1, Passport for Purgatorio, New York, 1986.

We find ourselves in a time when white is black, and black is white.

Think of a word. How is it heard? The one you try all day to say the right way, searching so long to say it all wrong.

As Dickens put it “it was the best of times, it was the worst of times, we were all going to heaven, we were all going the other way.” So it is to-day. It’s as though, we as a race are trying to understand the prime directive (Love Thy Neighbour as Thy Self).

There are no static physical things in existence. That also goes for personal relations, group dynamics and time. In physical reality, something appears “static” only at a particular level. So it is with cultural consciousness and collective alternative aesthetics.

Plexus is not something new, all through time the artists have always expressed themselves in the first person. That has always been the alchemical element that has made art fresh and new to the culture of each progressing time. The perspective of the first person made the divine connection between the creator and every day life, so the artist in the first person became a political and economic commodity, who ruled more historical and cultural power.

As far back in recorded time as we can go, all that was logic an illuminated thought was the artist in the first person. So, for as far as we stand now, we homo sapiens are still at the beginning of our time.

With all of our progress our “state of the art” is comparatively nothing when matched to our potential. Since we left the enlightened naivete of the garden we have felt the existence that the act of creation; be it making love, money, power or art has somehow taken up that empty space.

Art. Being an artist was the only one of these tasks that the individual could do in the first person.

Though art is created in the first person it is made for the observer, which is racial collective the human experience. This gestalt is the main racial evolutionary force, for though’ time and experience seems to stand still when compared with the direction of higher creative social and spiritual evolution. Plexus can be the crystal to focus the light of this change through. The will to manifest this higher potential is not the “ego” in the first person, but rather the individuals conscious effort to harmonize with this evolutionary potential.

We, as a race are at a crossroads with the advent of nuclear and even more horrific Tesla energy weapons, it can no longer be “business” as usual. It is the responsibility of the artist in the first person to create “alternative aesthetics” to perpetuate and positively re-inforce the higher evolutionary potential that our creation spawned.

Plexus, as an international group of artists, is at a point to facilitate this step in higher aesthetically generated survival and evolution. It has been positioned in time and space with the responsibility and duty to make this change. To shirk this responsibility will be done at a high moral and karmic cost.

### David Ecker

Transcript of the interview made at Angiola Churchill's loft in New York on November 1994.

I start by recalling my proposal The Voyage of the Elisabeth made in January 1990 and my art piece made for the Ganesh Dinner at Sandro’s house in June 1990, on the occasion of my participation to the Plexus event held in Rome.

My interest was and is in the distinction between physical spaces and virtual spaces.

If an idea in any sense counts as art, that is the underlying issue. Whether a photograph is a document of or is art. It involves almost all postmodern art history. It starts back with conceptual art. It starts back with Rauschenberg, Jasper Jones, John Cage, and before, for the first time in 1910 with Charles Ives’s Three New England Places, a complex musical composition giving the impression of separate bands marching from opposite directions toward the village square, playing different tunes.

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 really things get done spontaneously.

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

What happened in Rome at Sandro's house in 1990 is an example of Plexus environment, and a second example is my chance meeting with Giancarlo Schiaffini, the musician and composer, on the plane back to Rome. We generated a collaborative idea of an integrative music and visual performance, just by looking at his music score. Schiaffini has devised his own scoring system, like a visual analogue, to compose music.

I was not part of the original group which started Plexus. I was introduced to Plexus through Angiola Churchill and I served as doctoral 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.

Over this time my grasp of events beforehand ranged from a total misunderstanding 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 project Well Being originated from this context, in Rome in 1990, with Prof. Carlo De Marco, at that time Dean of the School of Medicine of Rome University and Sandro Dernini. The project gave relevance not only to the goal of scientific and physical well-being but also to the artistic and aesthetic dimensions of the well-being in the Twenty first Century as a measure of the health of the artists and of the societies in which they live.

Paper "*Cultural Navigations*" presented at the International Forum "The Well Being in the XXIst Century, held in Carloforte, Sardinia, Italy, in 1992.

The Christopher Columbus Consortium was established in New York City on March 10, 1989, by an international group of individuals interested in creating a series of projects to mark the 500th Anniversary of Columbus's landing in the Americas. Participants at this formative meeting included professors from several universities, and representatives from community and cultural organisations. The idea of a kind of "cultural navigation" arose out of this initial discussion, the notion that what was required of us was to re-think the significance of Columbus's landing in the light of a new global awareness of interdependence. Further meetings generated a veritable "fleet" of proposals. One of these proposals, made by Dr. Sandro Dernini of Plexus International, is now reaching fruition, a Reconciliation Forum to address the question of what will constitute well-being in the 21st Century for all the inhabitants of the globe. I should mention that our focus on well-being was the result of two preparatory meetings in the office of Professor Carlo De Marco of the University of Rome in January and June 1990. I should also mention that the lovely setting of San Pietro Island as the site of the first Forum was not an arbitrary choice. The members of the Christopher Columbus Consortium felt that this particular location would have deep political significance. For many of us, the initial idea of cultural navigation led quickly to the question of cultural identity. And for geo-political reasons, what better place than to locate our deliberations in the center of the western Mediterranean Sea. San Pietro Island was selected not only because of the amusing story of how Columbus allegedly altered the ship's

compass to mislead his crew into continuing on his intended course to Tunisia. More seriously, Sardinia provides a symbolic setting for fresh attempts at reconciliation between the peoples of the East and West as well as peoples of the North and South. The question of the cultural identity of Sardinia itself poses a challenge;

The nutritional, social, ethical and economic aspects of well-being will undoubtedly receive critical attention in the proceedings of the Forum. But surely 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 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 have a special role to play in relation to the well-being of the members of each of the cultures of the world.

For one organization represented here, ISALTA, it is not enough to document the arts in their cultural settings, but to take steps to enhance the arts and thus the quality of the lives people live. The name of this intentional group states its purpose: The International Society for the Advancement of Living Traditions in Art. Historically, artistic decline accompanies the loss of cultural identity. The felt need to preserve the meaning of a tradition in modern life is directly proportional to the loss of spiritual and material well-being of the artists and artisans sustaining their own cultures.

Western solutions to the world's misery, suffering, and destruction have tended in the 20th Century to be technological and humanistic, whereas earlier they tended to be religious or political solutions. In the name of science, human nature, or God, the assumption underlying these solutions is that they transcend culture and have universal efficacy. In contrast, we believe that the very meaning of "doing good for others" is culture-bound, as is the word "art". Cultural crises, whether caused by natural or man-made, whether caused by forces from outside or within a particular culture, are ideally to be resolved on the terms set by the affected culture. What this ideal suggests is that there should be no "privileged discourse" in multicultural exchanges. Communication on both "inside" and "outside" understandings of issues affecting well-being in the 21st Century must be encouraged from all cultural perspectives. The Forum should provide us with just such a human context.

### Frans Evers

Transcript of the interview made by the researcher, in Amsterdam, in 1995

I think in the first place I found my participation very pleasant. It was an adventure and I like adventures and I also like very much to travel with a goal, with an aim and not being a tourist. It's very good being in Rome

to meet artists from all different aesthetics and options and media and to be able also being invited to relate some of my theoretical works. I was glad that we could in a small kind of unit coming from Holland finally find

five people from Amsterdam out of which three participated in the exhibition as well as in the parade we made around the Coliseum and also in the meta theatre. I have a very good memory of the meta theatre because

there was a very vibrant atmosphere which showed that there was an audience for this which really became very interested to learn what it was all about. I remember Sandro giving a speech about the painter explaining

about his painting and some other people commenting on his work and there I gave this contribution about the Berlin Wall and the colors coming off and the sound of this very strange double iconoclastic process as I described it . I was very intrigued that such a 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. Therefore I found it very interesting to be faced with Plexus which was one of the few art form who is still wanting to try to make visible one of the waves in the ocean of Willem.

The concept of the open form in music was in fact worked from the beginning of the 50's until the end of the 70's when John Cage started his "happenings" in which musical compositions were not completely prescribed to the musicians but in which based on a few basic givens like numbers of times a certain sequence should be repeated the musicians themselves were allowed to create that piece of music. So completely unexpected and new material came on the moment when the music was played, and which was only partly predictable. that was a kind of form that was later on in the 60's extended to the visual arts when in Fluxus Nam June Paik and all the other people involved like founder George Maciunas started to work with their also sometimes called "happenings" and sometimes like the Germans they called it "Aktionen" in which different artists collaborated together in a performance. Interestingly the performances in that time mostly had a basis of deconstructionism or sometimes even destruction of pianos or instruments or other traditional instruments. They wanted to bring in electronics like the tape recorder, television sets, and all kinds of new constellations were made in which there was no longer any difference between music and sound. The concept of music was open to all kinds of new sounds which were allowed in the musical idiom like a "liberation of sound". In fact all these expectations were created early in the century but in the 60's they exploded. In fact the open form is a kind of exploded form, an exploded fugue of different things happening at the same time, but without any really powerful person directing exactly what is going to happen. It is much more based on agreements or the rules of a game which are accepted by everyone that is involved. With this as it's goal, and to achieve this goal the composer could not write his notes anymore, but started to develop graphic notations in which configurations of difference groups of musicians were placed but what they had to play was not determined so the basic principles were to allow certain kind of randomness in the happening. The personal influence of the artist was important which resulted always in unpredictable events. There are indications, but an indication can be of a very different nature that can be simply a symbolic almost painting-like structure which the musicians are to translate. So a kind of translation of visual cues or signs into auditory cues and signs and the predictable outcome of that is a kind of piece which is much more determined by sound structures and timbres than by pitch sequences or by dynamic forms but other composers did not use paintings; they started to work by introducing numbers and quotations, or like John Cage did use I-Ching to achieve at this kind of openness of the form by introducing elements which were already existing as a context the most famous example of Cage is the piece in which the pianist is sitting for a few minutes and just doing...not touching the instrument. As the audience you become aware of the sound that is always around you...ecological sounds , for instance and in that way also breaking the limit or the boundary between what is considered music as in

you might say a sound environment which at least Cage tried to show as a discontinuous area which is connecting those words and you will find these connections when you open the form. And there is juxtaposition. It's rather abstract but it simply means placing objects in relation to each other in a space. But it's an important theoretical term because it is one of the ways in which different art forms can be connected. to put them opposed in one space. instead of just only bringing them together in one so called emotional or musical line. The first time we came out with the modular construction December 30 1984, it was Willem Brugman met me at a place in New Haven where I used to live and where Willem came in with a group of artists presenting an exhibition of paintings of the father of one of the artists Dimitri Rimsksys and then I was introduced by one of the people who was shooting the exhibition with a video and then a collaboration started which resulted in few week in a show which was called Under Permanent Construction which was in fact based on a number of different story lines that was the Rubayat of Omar Kayam and another story line was Dream of a Madman , Dostyevsky. Then Willem found out that I had brought out from Amsterdam nine music cassettes made with a group of local Amsterdam artists under the name of ROYGBIV and in ROYGBIV there was an attempt to work with the electronic medium in an improvisational way and so that in the show they were brought together and the extra stage design made by Uri Stern, a local architects who were Israeli who lived in New Haven and had followed courses at the Yale architecture department but he wanted to change his career in the direction of theatre.

He brought into the theatre many beautiful constructions which were in fact reconstructions of existing materials which he had collected from all kinds of spaces ...demolition sites... the show itself was an enormously interesting working project- very condensed and also very new to many of the people. So, when the show was done we were sitting together to see how we could make a re composition of the videos and the materials which were used in preparing the show. In that discussion I started my first deep aesthetic communication with Willem Brugman explaining the background of ROYGBIV music.

The fascination with color; the relationship to Dutch colorism like in abstract arts of Piet Mondrian used those primary colors and forms and then, all of a sudden, Willem popped up with a visual artist from Switzerland called Richard Lohse. He was an artist who, in the Post World War period, was one of the few artist who continued to work in abstract expressionism and he connected his work to the serial approach of the composers. And what was the composers idea in those days-to have a kind of democratic or equality between musical parameters.

Like pitch-they wanted to compose with that as a separate parameter, volume was a separate parameter, but also timbre was a separate one, and musical space. So they had to find out ways to bring together those parameters in a system without hierarchy- and there, I think, the connection comes into this use of the term of the modular construction because that was our fascination- how can we present the materials of the show without giving the dominance to text, without dominance of image, without dominance of music- but how to present it in a way that people could observe the process...that was the fascination I think- and one of the learning aspects of the projects in New Haven was this whole experimentation's with open form which in fact it was what we did.

But as soon as you go at it you have to think about hierarchies- so we went through all the video tapes that Dimitri had shot- and finally decided that we did not want to show the edited video results- but the process of editing. And therefore this project of December 30 was called Image Edit. And here it is described as a video documentation of an environmental project of Dwight Street and a creation Under Permenant Construction and the arts hall will be used to present a total view of modular constructivism as a realized concept. The presentation of video as an integral part of theatrical experiments with guest

speaker Dr Loek Verbeke from the Free University of Amsterdam explaining the modular construction and using some words by the painter Richard Lohse. He made this statement " a systematic sequence of these registrations is activated in such a way that the dynamic formulation is achieved and that organization of principles arrange themselves in this process. The structure is unlimited and only receives its formal value through the presentations of tapes." Richard. P. Lohse: on the modular construction. Modular construction starts with an acknowledgment of all the elements that are involved in a process, very detailed, very specific acknowledgment. If I am allowed to use the metaphor of cooking here...when you start cooking you will go into the kitchen and you need a stove you might need an oven you need a light you need gas or you need wood. Then you have to get the ingredients that you will start cooking with, then you have to get your pots and pans you have to get spoons and so forth. And, within the analogy of the kitchen, you can say the modular construction starts with the preparation of all the different ingredients that you need. In our case, and today that hasn't changed much the modular construction takes place in liminal space: in a space which is in between- because we don't own this space. We actually don't even hire this space- we use this space for a limited time. So- I've made a metaphor about cooking- about the kitchen-the acknowledgment of all the different ingredients now, the next thing that is more than ever important, when you look at modular construction from a multi cultural perspective- it means that whatever the contribution is going to be from whatever perspective its coming no perspective can be dominant...all the perspectives have to exist simultaneously.

So modular construction, now in the 90's also involves synthesis of all the different ingredients and also involves synchronicity. I think that what has happened in the past ten years is that a modular construction is now more than ever possible to understand if you use the concept of synesthesia....that all the senses , together, create an extra sense experience and this is the objective of a modular construction....that if you put all these different layers together, in a transparent way by which you superimpose them on top of one another so that space and time gets shared by all the individuals so that the individual does not lose its characteristics, but joins larger energy fields. My particular interest is that modular constructions work on a psychic plane of peoples. So these collaborations take place under modular construction brings us in a way back to concepts of total theatre - to concepts of total energy - or to "Gesamtkunstwerk" which is a concept that is borrowed from music theater- perhaps especially Wagner- but other people were active in that as well. So the modular construction has gone into any space and any time. Here also we can make a link to the concept that later related to our working collaboration, and that was the strange word of 'ethnoreality' but which is, in fact, not so much a construction as an awareness of all these different drops of culture which are now becoming integrated in a bigger collective but we also faced still the fear of many of the cultures to make that step. and therefore we still face all these tensions.

But to comment on that situation it is so important that in art forms examples are given of constructions of elements which are allowed to express themselves in democratic way. there is place enough for all the different tastes, colors, sounds which an individual or collective of individuals will make and we are now facing the situation - in fact this comment was made soon before or soon after the Berlin Wall dropped- we were connecting here in Amsterdam for a kind of national party and brought together a number of people in front of this statue we made for this ethnoreality celebration showing that it is possible to bring together in a few hours thirty or forty nationalities, different colors of the people together and this is the situation we are living in- which is a complete contrast to not only thirty years ago- there were only a minority of colored people in Amsterdam and now in total number it is a

majority- over fifty percent- so this process we have faced in the last few years is such an enormous social impact that therefore it is very important that in the arts that these kinds of energies and energy frictions especially because we also agree that in this process it is not going about making equal by killing or taking away- that's easy, yeah- but by recognition of the different forms these energies are going to be confronted with each other and they form the new binding chemistries that come out which is still the example of the kitchen is very good - every little pan is having now its little different atmosphere and finally it has to result in a good meal- coming together in the stomach. Maybe it is interesting to quote Kandinsky at this point because my research has shown that for this whole problem of the relationship between the arts especially Kandinsky has made, in about 1910 or 11, a fundamental statement in which he completely broke with the Wagnerian approach of Gesamtkunstwerk there was already a wish to bring together the music , the singing, the dance, the acting and also the stage design- but a main characteristic of that approach was that in all the different lines of the media always the same movement was followed- so when the music started to speed up the dancers were running faster on the stage and the scenery changed quicker. Which, in fact is a nice result, but its only about intensities growing. Kandinsky commented on this when he gave his utopian vision on what he called the monumental theatre and it was a kind of art form in which three layers would be dealt with in a completely equal way but in an other aesthetic way than Wagner.

The layers were physical movement, musical movement and color movement. He said - when you make an approach- in all these layers the same motion pattern is followed then you only get the kind of effect in which the sensory intensity is intensified. But as soon as you go about making one of the layers opposed to the other, so that when the music is going faster but the dancers are freezing in a still- then you get a new kind of relationship- a juxtaposition between the art forms in which new experiences come which some people call alienation- other people call it- hey, this is a new perceptual space: contrapuntal.

### Leonard Horowitz

Unpublished paper “*Introduction*”, to PLEXUS Recall 1, Passport for Purgatorio, New York, 1986.

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: “Mytho-Compressionism”.

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.

From the program of Eve, Purgatorio Show 1986, New York:

“....Eve takes place on a mythological art slaves ship and is performed by more than 200 contemporary artists handcuffed together in an journey between reality and fantasy ending when.... Eve sits between Adam and God in the Sistine Chapel....The Marlboro robot arrives with the key words: 99 cents for a 200 artists Art Opera created and produced by all the artists together to establish an international art Community Credit Line and to establish SWEAT EQUITY ....Next fall the art slaves shuttle ship will cross the international sea to arrive in the bronze age of Sardinia in the summer 1987.

Paper “*Plexus Art Redefinition of a Campbell Soup Can*,” published in Plexus Newsletter 1988, New York, by Plexus International Art Urban Forum, Inc.

On Saturday, February 20, at 7:00 PM., Dr. Sandro Dernini organized an historical and aesthetic “Art-Ritual” in and around the Olympic swimming pool at CUANDO. (CUANDO has been the New York Nerve Center and Plexus Performance Cultural Center since 1985, including the three Co-Operas Goya Time, Purgatorio Time, and Eve).

“An Art Redefinition of a Campbell Soup Can “ was the theme song for the performance in the pool and was orchestrated by Dr. Dernini as a “Plexus Process Piece” to commemorate the first anniversary of the dematerialization of Andy Warhol.

The inspiration for this Art Ritual was two Art Symposia organized by Jorge Glusberg and Angiola Churchill of New York University, both co-directors of the International Center for Advanced Studies in Art (ICASA). Dr. Dernini has previously performed his dematerialization event at Patricia Anichini Gallery on February 18, 1987. A phenomenological inquiry was the nature of the event and is at the same time intended as part of the on-going Plexus process. A phenomenological inquiry in this event takes on the true meaning of art as and in the process of becoming, by allowing it to happen -- giving first a basic overall structure and then allowing the participants to complete the work by collective interaction.

In the swimming pool, Loisada samba Band, a Brazilian percussion band led by Tony, snaked and serpented their way through the assembled artists, setting the sonic under and overtones, resonating and reifying the room with their atavistic, basic beat.

At the apex of the pool, Dr. Dernini performed his ritualistic “Art Altar” piece by the deconstruction of a Campbell’s Soup can. In fact, a whole case of Campbell’s was ritualized and reinvented by placing pennies on the cans and painting them crimson red, blood red, sacrificial red. We have sacrificed King Warhol’s very persona on the Art Altar to recreate further meanings and to extend the compass of art by our collective creativity.

The Art Altar was ritualized by the Plexus Process of the “Group Shot.” The ritual Group Shot has a life of its own and acts as both process and documentation, a moment frozen in time intended to expand, compressing Art history into Pasts, Presents and Futures (Picasso’s most important process). This process of interactive compression and expansion of time was dramatically demonstrated by the attending artists. Wes Power, a New Age product designer and ecoastrologist, aided Dr. Dernini in the construction of the Art Altar; international artist Helene Valentin waved her red Serpent flag; Franco Ciarlo displayed his Artboat sculpture; Anita Steckel exhibited her “Winged Woman” in flight from the Empire State Building to the Sistine Chapel. All this was framed by brochures and posters of past ICASA Symposia and by a statement by Gianfranco Mantegna about how “art must be subversive and

sensational.” All activities were videotaped by Giuseppe Sacchi and Franco Castro and will be distributed by Fran Duffy, producer of Snub TV. Lorenzo Pace performed a shamanistic ritual by transforming the torch of art in the same symbolic way that the Olympic torch has been rekindled throughout history. Voodoo music was performed and percussed by Brazilian Sidney da Silva and his Paraphernalia drum beating.

The Group Shot was further ritualized by Lynn Kanter, dressed as Marilyn Monroe, who pictorialized and Polarized the event and then displayed her immediate “photo-feedbacks.” Renate Landenberger, German photographer and ecology activist, photographed all of us for posterity, or however long photographs last in our universe.

After the Group Shot, Barnaby Ruhe, world champion of boomerang, opened the case of Campbell’s and imprinted each case with the Plexus logo. Frank Shifreen, original Terminal Show organizer, painted pennies with the ritualistic red of the evening. Then, Jamaican fashion designer Twilight distributed the Plexus cans to the audience, free of charge. The evening’s performances ended with artist and art critic Leonard Horowitz dancing the Art Applejack and the Charleston.

Thus ended the first episode of The Deconstruction of Andy Warhol’s Commodity Symbol, with Love.

Unpublished paper “*Compressionisme*,” New York, 1989.

I first experienced ‘compressionisme’ in the Spring of 1985, where I was suddenly engulfed by a “Total Theatre” environmental spectacular Opera called “Goya Time,” a continuous and extremely compressed dramatization of three paintings by Francisco Goya: “The Nude Maja,” “The Royal Family,” and “The Eight of May.” This avant garde “Co-opera” was conceived, produced and directed by Dr. Sandro Dernini, an accomplished biologist from the island of Sardinia, in collaboration with Gretta Safarty and Lawrence “Butch” Morris.

By dramatizing these three Goya painting and having this cast of Goya costumed artists literally run through the audience, it destroyed the normal sense of separation of staged theatre, since all at once you were not only the observer, but a participant.

In order to really catch the total and unexpected actions taking place, one had to constantly shift one’s view from the Royal family on the balcony and further physically follow their descent through the amazed milling crowd below.

The Royal Family pushed their way through the packed gymnasium, past thirty artists doing their simultaneous versions of the Nude Maja, and brushed past me, almost knocking me down.

The whole spectacle was tied together and totally reified by modular music created and conducted and orchestrated by Butch Morris and further amplified by the dancing of Gloria McLean and company.

The whole Opera lasted an hour chronologically .... but... psychologically seemed to be over in ten minutes. 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 one agrees with the theory that art should contain elements of surprise, then this plexus process and operas by Robert Wilson, by Meredith Monk and the Ontological-Hysterical process of Richard Forman is that Robert Wilson, Meredith Monk and Richard Forman tend to suspend time, to Surrealize it, and certainly in Robert Wilson work, to stretch time into a suspended “Dream State,” a psychedelicate state.

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 Wilsons ouvre 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.

The very idea of "Modern Art" has to do with this 'compressionistic' process, since time certainly speeded up psychologically and physically for the French Impressionists, who invented modern art by: Improvising, by having a speeded-up moment to moment interaction with the last brush stroke and with the reified overall effect. They did it to the extent that the real subject matter of all modern art becomes the process itself, and any visual subject matter really becomes a vehicle employed in this amazing compressionistic process. (The tail wags the dog).

No painter who has been sensitive and aware of "Whats been going on" has failed to be positively influenced by this direct improvised process. If we draw a line from the cubist space of Cezanne, we can extend this modern compass through Picasso and into the New York School of "Action-Painting," the so called Abstract Expressionism, especially early DeKooning. We can draw another line from Gaugin through Matisse and into Color Field painting, into more interactive color-shapes in space. This flattening out of the picture plane not only compresses space, but... returns it to a universal 'primitive' sense as envisioned by Gaugin and even Mark Rothko.

(if you have a guest and a host, then you have a GHOST... Marcel Duchamp)

Note to David Ecker, "*Compressionisme*," New York, 1989:

Compressionisme is caused by time speeded up in our unconsciousness. We are constantly compressing and fusing new forms, larger yet more complex forms from old ones.

Modern art fuses the conscious with the unconscious so impression plus reification plus process are added to the the dynamics of art. It is a new fused form. Picasso, using this new form fused the past with the present. We now have so much information that we are compressing it digitally into tiny computer chips capable of scoring billions of bits of info on a tiny compressed chip. All art forms are compressions, in that they use a unique shorthand to arrive at their metaforms.

A 4 line haiku can express eternity. One plus one equals three.

The plexus process is to combine, fuse these art forms. So we are fusing fusions, compressing compressions into a larger, more complex, more powerful network. By 1992, we will have gathered enough compression to explode intercontinentally (North America, Europe, Africa, South America).

## Arturo Lindsay

Unpublished paper “*The Ancestral Messenger’s Conference Report*,” in reference to Plexus Black Box, A Multicultural Data Bank for La Caravella dell’Arte, a round Table held at Metateatro, Rome, on July 2, 1990.

On July 2, 1990, with an audience of artists from Europe, Africa, and the Americas, Plexus convened its first international conference. The panellists consisted of Dr. David Ecker, artist, director of ISALTA (International Society for the Advancement of Living Traditions in Art), co-cordinator of the 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium, professor of art and art education, New York University; Dr. Okechukwu E. Odita, artist, member of the 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium, professor of art and African History, Ohio State University; Dr. Arturo Lindsay, artist, scholar in residence, Franklin and Marshall College, Plexus-Atlanta, assistant professor, Spelman College, Atlanta; Dr. Frans Evers, artist, Plexus Amsterdam, professor, Laboratory of Plastic Sound, Royal Conservatory, The Hague, Holland; Mr. Fabrizio Bertuccioli, artist, Plexus Rome; Mr. Frank Sheefren, artist, Plexus-New York; Mr. Ciro Ciriaco, artist, Tempo Irreale, Rome; and Dr. Sandro Dernini, coordinator of the 1992 Christopher Columbus Consortium and originator of Plexus.

Each panelist made a presentation regarding his research, work and or vision of Plexus’s future. Along with a discussion of my work with remote control drawing tools, as the Ancestral Messenger of Plexus, I assumed the responsibility of opening our channels of communication by providing each artists in the Plexus network with my vision for Plexus and the enclosed mailing list.

My vision for Plexus is to see artists use this mailing list to invite each other to work on international collaborative projects; and to share ideas and resources. I encourage my fellow panellists as well as every member of Plexus to make use of the mailing list to directly communicate with us. I have added to the list of participants at the conference in Rome, the names and address of several other artists who have participated in previous Plexus events.

Please forgive any inaccuracies in the mailing list. Misspelled names and address are largely due to my inability to read the artist’s handwriting. Please type or print clearly all corrections as well as names of artists who were omitted and forward to Dr. Arturo Lindsay. I will update the mailing list once a year, or as needed, or as funds allow. The Ancestral Messenger “Definition” of Plexus:

The following is a more concrete description of the proposal I presented in Rome. Beginning with a biological definition of a plexus I propose we built an art definition of Plexus as a metaphor. As you will note in the art definition, I have written in italics (originally in bold) letters the transformation into metaphor.

### Biological Plexus

The communication which takes place between two or more nerves form what is called a *plexus*. Sometimes a plexus is formed by the primary branches of the trunks of the nerves - as the cervical, brachial, lumbar, and sacral plexuses - and occasionally by the terminal funiculi, as in the plexuses formed at the periphery of the body. In the formation of a plexus the component nerves, then join, and again subdivide in such a complex manner that the individual funiculi becomes interlaced most intricately; so that each branch leaving a plexus may contain filaments from each of the primary nervous trunks which forms it. In the formation also of smaller plexuses at the periphery of the body there is a free interchange of the funiculi and primitive fibres. In each case, however, the individual filaments remain separate and distinct, and also do not inoculate with one another.

## ART PLEXUS

The communication which takes place between two or more artists form what is called a *Plexus*. Sometimes a *Plexus* is formed by the primary branch (*Sandro*) - as a *Co-Opera*, a *Purgatorio Show*, or a *Christopher Columbus Project* - and occasionally by *local Plexuses*, as in the plexuses formed in *Amsterdam, Dakar, New York, Rome, Sardinia, Milano*, and soon *Atlanta*.

In the formation of a plexus the component *artists* divide, then join, and again subdivide in such a complex manner that the individual *events* become interlaced most intricately, so that each branch leaving a plexus may contain filaments from each of the primary *aesthetic* trunks which form it.

In the formation also of a smaller plexuses at the periphery of the body there is a free interchange of *artists*. In each case, however, the individual *artist* remains separate and distinct, *maintaining his/her own identity*, and do *not* inoculate with one another, *losing their individuality*.

### Paolo Maltese

Paper "*An Infinite Serpent*," Milano, October 1987, published in Passport for Plexus Serpent, Cagliari, Celt Editions, 1987.

Einstein once stated: "The most beautiful experience one can have is the mysterious. It consists of fundamental emotion, the cradle of true Art and Science."

And the poet, Mario Luzi said, "Science accepts the idea of mystery rather than repel it. For a poet, the mysterious is a place from where to return to rationality, and from which doubts stem."

If today, philosophers have been beaten, artists continue to fight the mysterious, while great thing are happening in Science, as presocratics, once used to do, following E. Zeller's time-scale.

Mystery-Reason: the artist at the confluence of these ever-changing words.

PLEXUS is therefore a metaphors in which observations, analyses, discussions, reflections, actions, pilot-shows, stretched to encourage the continuation of research, all come together, and like an infinite serpent rising up to tree of knowledge, renews unity and consistence to self-conscious and common research.

In this way, by adventuring into mists of metaphor, myth and archetypes, one is brought closer to the mysterious since the metaphor is enemy of appearance, is the damp earth, and is the roots.

Behind it lies the mystery of the future, the continuation of imaginary threads still be defined and fully elaborated, as PLEXUS looks for.

Thus, PLEXUS project does not set itself easy objectives, so in an Event of such vast size as that of Gavoi (Sardinia), and based on very ambitious goals, (but also still very uncertain), the danger of rhetoric, indefiniteness and superficiality continually remain a possible trap.

At this point Cicero springs to my mind, who used to ask himself, how soothsayers managed not to laugh when they met each other.

The Gavoi opportunity has been useful, useful because it allowed contacts and feed-backs between artists who came from different areas, and who did not know each other. Among these were the inhabitants of Gavoi, a town in the centre of the Barbagia of Sardinia that accepted what could be defined as being - for Gavoi - a challenge.

It was an important occasion for the inhabitant of Gavoi to reflect on what to do in the future, just as for PLEXUS to find proof for an interdisciplinary dialogue, got out from the usual artistic contexts (and scientific).

This is the point I should like to emphasise: that what happened in Gavoi could become "History," in other words it could be the catalyst of reflections for everybody, for PLEXUS, thoughts which in their turn produce more thoughts and future realities for everyone, all in a continual spiral (the serpent), towards a future growth which is "History."

### Maria Pia Marsala

Transcript made of the interview made in her house, in Rome, in 1995.

I started to know about Plexus in 1987 in Rome during a press presentation at the Teatro in Trastevere. Slowly in 1989 I became involved as performer in 1992 Cristoforo Colombo: Viaggio nel Pianeta Arte, an art opera held at the Metateatro in Rome, in which I played the role of the Black Princess.

My participation was signed fully by my strong emotions and my passion to be an artist in the first person, with my own individual expression, within a collective work progress.

Plexus was an occasion for an artistic experience of confrontation with the others participants, performing and acting human life, within the whole context of life. My participation was a improvisation performance in which I played with all my emotions and impressions in a stage within a closed space. It was difficult for me to express artistically, in an harmonic way, myself as an artist, as I had learned until that moment as dancer and actress. 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 the others+s 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 -Il 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. We kept alive our intuition, during those discussions, in order to go deep and deep inside ourselves, to open our eyes, our hearts, our minds, playing, as only children can play, with total love.

My experience was strongly lived and it is related to my own individual experience as a researcher of true global love and harmony.

I would like to recall as a meaningful part of my continuous 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+ 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.

Assane M'Baye

Written recollection made in Dakar, in 1994, translated by the researcher.

The Living Plexus Black Box: Art, Well Being and Reconciliation

First, I would like to thank the GOOD LORD and his son Prophet MOHAMMED to have allowed to figure the name of our venerable religious chief, founder of the Mouridism CHEICH AHMADOU BAMBA on the page of The Living Plexus Black Box: Art, Well Being and Reconciliation. Dr. Sandro Dernini.

I make to the memory of our deceased brother and friend Langouste MBow a compassionate prayer "Earth be light to him", for all activities of Plexus Dakar. Bring Your Serpent.

All life is a mission, to not say that it is a personal effort within the whole society, little or large.

Cheik Ahmadou Bamba in his time has been a high reconciler of esprits and culture. During his exile of seven years, seven months, seven days, he wrote seven tons of litanies (khassayide) rich of metaphors all centered on the GOOD LORD, the Prophet and on the man.

We learn that the real war of the man, it is not "Le Djade" (The Holy War) but a truly fight on ourselves.

"Work, as if you never die and pray, as if you have to die tomorrow" (Cheik Ahmadou Bamba). We thank you a lot Cheik Ahmadou Bamba.

"SA DJAN WATHIANA" is a diction in our Wolof language, a metaphor which means "your serpent is descended." It is a custom to say it, after to have accomplished a good mission.

Dr. Sandro Dernini we thank you and we give you the power and authorization to do what it is right for a good realization of your honorable mission. SA DJAN WATHIANA.

The events to which I participated in the project of Plexus International are in effect multiple and different, both in idea and in action, realized with many difficulties, without money, with hard and very limited wealth from our side.

It is at the cultural center Malic Sy, Dakar, during a conference made by Dr. Sandro Dernini with the participation of the director of the Italian Cultural Institute, where I had my first contact in 1986 and 1987 with Plexus International. He spoke, with an American-Italian accent, about the electromagnetic serpent and of science, by which I was delightful very much that day.

It was from the departure of that moment that I started to work very hard on the project (Bring Your Serpent) "Time-Art Ningki-Nagka," the metaphor of the serpent, Plexus art co-opera.

With a great surprise by the artists of Dakar, I saw myself to be invited in Italy. I would like to say, that I always dreamed to go in Europe. The dream was concretized, I was with 160 artists of 23 nationalities, arrived on July 4, 1987, in Sardinia, Gavoi, for the first international market of slaves of art, -Il Serpente di Pietra+, Plexus Art Co-Opera n° 4, held in a megalithic sanctuary at the center of the Mediterranean sea, the hearth and as well as the lung of the Western culture, linked by an European and American group, Dax Digital Art Exchange, of Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh (USA) with the intelligently equipped computers by Prof. Franco Meloni of the Department of Physics of the University of Cagliari in Italy.

It was from the departure of this first experience which allowed myself to travel beyond the frontiers of our country and of our continent that I was motivated to enforce the activities of Plexus International in order to be able to continue the art Co-Opera N°5 and consequently to arrange better in direction of the FESPAC 88 of Dakar, which sadly did not happen.

In December 1987 after my return in Dakar, at the Auditorium of the National Institute of Popular and Sportive Education, at the Stadium Iba Mar Diop, in Dakar, we organized a round-table about the theme "The Popularization of Art and of the Artists of All World," chaired by Dr. Sandro Dernini with the majority of the guests made by artists with the presence of Abdoul Magib Dia, rappresentant of the Mayor of the City of Dakar, and of Prof. Youssouph TraorÄ, president of the Club Litteraire David Diop, who introduced the debate.

It was a date which has to be kept in the history of Plexus because we have done a good departure in direction of the City Authorities of 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.

This voyage reintroduces us in an adventure without limits.

Plexus Dakar invites you to travel with its own history.

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, which was previewed from December 23, 1988, to January 3, 1989.

In the context of this encounter the artists have been invited to participate to the realization of the Art Co-Opera N°5 "The Electromagnetic Serpent Ningki-Nangka and the Exile of Cheik Ahmadou Bamba", a synchronized and simultaneous presentation of art and science, which will be realized under the form of a parade spectacle in the island of Goree, in occasion of the second event of Plexus International, with a ritual ceremony made by the recovery of the sculpture of Arturo Lindsay, buried in the sacred land of Goree, to give a great homage to the memory of the Diaspora, against racism and in the name of freedom of art.

We wait with a great hope the international fond of art under the flag of universal reconciliation and we wait the arrival of the real ship of the former slaves of art on board the Elisabeth.

Paper "*A Brief Radiography of Plexus Dakar*", made in Dakar on 1990 as answer to Franco Meloni's Plexus Black Box Open Call, Cagliari, 1989; translated from French by the researcher.

The experience that I had drawn within these two past years, from 1987 to 1988, is made upon a radiography, this means upon an analysis and a diagnosis on the gathering of situations which Plexus has met with us in Dakar, within an open circle of people, unfolded to the world, but also insulated, where Art saw the first day of its deep roots.

Africa, nest of the Civilization of the Humanity, seems to be forgotten or not well understood by our confreres of the North.

If we today should accept Plexus as a miraculous system of communication for the development of cultural exchanges within different cultures for the benefit of an Universal Civilization, it should be necessary, in the beginning, to take into the account relationships and essential means of these different cultures which reflect themselves at the level of their own current development towards more the Western culture than our.

I think well that Plexus is a nice and good Western or American idea. It is an apple which comes from you, but not from Africa, and Plexus is not the sun with thousands rays.

It is the reason by which Plexus looks to us "depassé" elapsed or badly understood by the group of Dakar or for the default of an organization plan or still rather for the harmful consequences of the FESPAC 88 which finally was dropped out by the organizers. What was left was only the improvisation by the side of Dr. Sandro Dernini. In effect it was failed to do anyway something in the place of the FESPAC, this created to my opinion a big misunderstanding within the artists of Dakar. The information did not pass within them, they have not absolutely understood anything, they were fixed more on the level of personal complaints rather than on the artistic and scientific expression of Plexus itself.

I pull off your attention, dear friend, on the very fragile resources of the artists of Dakar, they have almost nothing, and they lay as misunderstood in the little city of Dakar and in Gorée. They have fear to adventure themselves abroad within new systems of artistic expression. "Slaves of Art."

Another point need to be underlined which is that of information and above all of the communication, because we have a problem of times and distances, which it makes the use of communication very expensive in Dakar and which asks a great capital of money.

To my opinion these are somehow the very important factors to be kept in consideration in reference to the Black Box and to the future of Plexus, in order that the Government or goodwill people of Dakar may give their full contribution, without difficulty.

I pull off your attention, one more time, dear friend, to make you understanding Africa is an old and tired land that needs help to go up psychologically and materially.

Anyway these two past years for me have been rich of experiences and they allowed me to know my own mistakes in the field of public relations, and above all on the plan of organization and method.

I have the feeling that you are our privileged partners which was concretized by your great contribution in artistic matter which never will forget and which will constitute for us a treasure, a force, a motivation to communicate with the rest of the world with peace.

Without to forget your presence, your daughter Valeria in Dakar, at Gorée, and the forever presence of your excellent and invisible Anna Saba who will always rest with the precious stone of our deep memory, inspiring us for a better exposition of tomorrow, for Plexus afterwards, thanks to Anna Saba, without forgetting other people and artists of Sardinia.

Paper "*Le Serpent Ningki-Nangka*," published in Passport for Plexus Serpent, Cagliari, Celt Editions, 1987:

Plexus invites you to travel to Dakar through a journey of the mind of our times by the invisible Serpent Ningki-Nangka into the fog of the metaphor, into the animism, the ancient Negro-African religion that is not by magic or by fetishism, but by an authentic African way to communicate to the Universe and to spirituals forces.

This vital energy is only an emanation of the divine power and manifests the African inner sensibility to be able to feel animals, stars, the moon, the sun and everything in us and in the world fully in mutation.

Ningki-Nangka is a compression of time, space and of relativity, between East and West, South and North.

It is a metaphor, a star of poetry, of epic song, of art, of music and of light. "Un arc en ciel" coming from the richness of our soul built on the vital strength of our faith.

For the name of Winnie Mandela, of all oppressed, of all women, for all children, for love and peace. From the tam-tam the sun of the new world will rise.

Luigi Mazzealli

Unpublished paper "*Open Letter to Sandro Dernini*", Cagliari, June 1988, translated from Italian by the researcher:

Dear Sandro,

in decoding your "Plexus Strategic Map", doubts surpass certainties. It is a good sign. Plexus Manifest, opening itself, as the graphic which expresses it, on all spatial directions is a sign of these times. I would wish it were less. Many suggestions fascinate me (the international circuit of art managed by the artist in the first person; the myth as the re-acquisition of the artist in a world from which was alienated; the metaphor as travelling factory; art as gratuity and opportunity of intersubjective exchanges behind the specific of the artistic language; the relation among artists of different nationalities and cultures etc. Nevertheless as I said questions and perplexities are not few, starting from the problem of the organization. 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 Manifest 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 organizational view, does not have a satisfactory answer in history. This should let understand to have not too many illusions when this problem again shows itself: we know that also a non organization under any title shows up itself may generate monstrosity not less than a centralized organization.

About this point it should be opportune to discuss for long time in the group, we should force ourselves to have a constant reference to our praxis to not allow ourselves to go out of the roads more or less by purely verbal suggestions contained inevitably in the hypothesis package of the departure.

And nevertheless, there is no doubt, the request of freedom is an essential condition of how art poses itself and to which anyway it is necessary to give space. To repropose with strength this need, Plexus is right. But the point that for me, in this moment is urgent, it is another. It regards a very controversial question for which Plexus paid until now a high price.

In the Plexus Manifest among others, there is this statement "Art is where is and not What is" which has a great conceptual density. I cannot exclude that because of this reason, it easily allows misunderstandings if as I am afraid this concept is connected for relationship more or less close with the DADA praxis. We have without doubts in the Appointment of Duchamp its more direct historical reference and the more probable reading key.

As it is known the appointment represented in the history of art a decisive jump of quality which brought to the extreme consequences the loss of the linguistic specificity of art already started with the Cubism and the functionalist movements in early years of the XX Century. Through the appointment to decide



of the artistic value of a given object or given event it is not anymore its historical linguistic specificity, contained no separable in its inner formal structure or if you prefer its aesthetic quality, but the simple "additamento" (appointing).

Therefore it is decided by the person who officiates the object or the event in which it is placed.

Rather than it is decided for it by the generic artistic intentionality of whom is officiating the rite of the "additamento" or of the "re-knowing".

For example the mythic urinal of Duchamp was artistic because it was out of context respect its original environment and out of function regards to its use value. That is it was placed in a place (an art gallery) already by itself "deputato" to confer licences of artistic value to any kind object which was exposed intentionally within its walls. Naturally with the appointment the artistic object loses its intrinsic use value and of communicative, relational, semiologic exchange value, if you wish, when you like. But Duchamp did not invent anything: already since long time before the commodity colonized this new realm of art. In other words, the aesthetics, the value, the thingness of the work, the original and intentional meaning of the message, the QUALITY and every thing else we used to associate to the work of art were reduced from this moment to little less or little more, in a sigh.

Amen.

After such a event of this amount we are not worried if the line opened by the new praxis of making art, the object of art loses all its linguistic and communicative autonomy while it grows at the same time the importance of the intentional act of the maker and its existential weight.

The object is just little more than an opportunity to insert breaking occasions by the officiant on the scenery, sometimes with all the weight of his body presence (think to the Body Art for example) therefore the subject takes the place of the object. "L'Arte é dov'è e non cos'è".

There where there is as we saw its officiant who puts off the rite of commemoration "corpore presenti"(present body) for its premature disappearance.

Have we to interpret in this way recent Plexus performances in Sardinia with what more flatly revival was reserved by the neodada practices: from Poor Art to the late experiences of Land Art and that was possible to find?

I am afraid that to motivate these ways of making art were in some ways the same theoretical papers of Plexus which probably because they are necessarily crowded within a contracted form in a very short space offer spaces for more current interpretations or if its allowed to me for some "boutade" very chip in the second hand market of the "americanerie".

Sincerely the steps of Plexus Manifest that I am going to quote behind the fact that are rich of poetic suggestions and clearly linked to urgent and concrete problems they do not contribute to leave out some doubts while anyhow they solicit some kindly ironic shafts:

"The live TV news becomes the only acknowledged reality in the world."

"The individual must make himself fitting and predictable if he hopes for a place in a world where every fantasy has found its justification."

"Whoever engages in art-making has to adopt toward the present time the attitude implied by the concept of the artistic work's gratuitousness. Art is the "need to exercise humanity" without hoping for fame, without falling into worry about the future and into anxiety to succeed, to grow attached to a piece of work, to suffer the limitations of reason, to lose sight of life."

"The artist today..., mustn't make use of his imagination only in the making of his work. He has to use it also in his everyday life,... thus accepting other people's creative energies as well as his own."

Franco Meloni

Written recollection made in Cagliari, in 1994.

PLEXUS =  $kB \ln W$

When the hopes seemed to be still compatible with a normal life, the distinction between Art and Science seemed surmountable after a careful definition of terms. Difficult, but not impossible. PLEXUS had the useful characteristics for a research with joyful aspects. We played without well knowing which were the stakes, and there always are.

We had to look for personifications to be followed in order to cover a role. The scripts weren't always respected. The subjects was fleetingly indefinite. The scientific matrix was proved by many rationality peaks. Acting in history - either capital or small letter - we could feel the possible implications. The different potential openings regarded problems thought in solitude but discussed between many. And all of this, unavoidably, seen with eyes more and more tired of human errors.

We needed greater synthesis efforts in order to define PLEXUS. Art and Science was not enough, Freedom was imperfectly vague, Artist "in the first person" made one think at barren personalism, Antilibretto brought back necessarily to previous experiments. But the accidental or wanted interaction with others forced to change the relations with the outside, or the inside, that regarded us. The solicitations were strong, but had to be supported both by a credibility and by a continued research of transforming stimulus.

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.

Having necessarily to put together scientific concepts with Art images, it seemed inevitable to run back to the one period of human history about which judgements agree on estimation of values: the Renaissance.

It was possible because of the genetic connections to identify in the problem of the Flagellation paving reconstruction a way to deal, in an apparently operative way, with the combination of different cultures. Not being enough Piero, we wanted further on to represent one's vision of the problem with a kind of stamp what would define PLEXUS once for all:  $kB \ln W$ . The operation seemed completed, the explanation left to others.

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. It would be as looking at a river's mouth, while going up the water-course to the source and seeing the reflection of every single wave.

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 position in the scenery requires that a physicist - after all a man of science - expresses itself according to schemes that the others are expecting from him.

In this situation, forced to explain tangibly my role, I had necessarily to give the clearest possible idea of the reason why I was interested in PLEXUS and above all the way I thought about it.

Avoiding an abused broadcast-fascinating language, I thought that entropy could be used: an image-creating-image happily used many times in physics.

Once more a concept apparently known is used to introduce the problem.

Like other times entropy is useful to lead the way to reasoning that will later develop along routes before unforeseeable. Then in a particular scenery - and here the explanations would get entangled in skeins of the previous experiences - we enunciate the equality between a thermodynamically important quantity - a real solid bridge between the microscopic and the macroscopic - and a movement that involves different competencies and interests.

Very nice picture. But unsatisfactory. For many reasons: because the definition is good for closed systems; because the molecules don't think and people do; because it is impossible to measure the thermodynamic probability of a dynamic system with a variable density outside a laboratory.

But, even if the formula is not true, it is interesting to see its limits and the possible alterations, or only the criticism.

The system is not closed, and it would be absurd if it was. Therefore the inquiry is shifted in a field even more interesting - Boltzmann will forgive me - of the preceding one.

We enter in the complexity's world, ruled by laws of the chaos. Fascinating. Therefore we draw advantages from a wrong initial statement. Beside we can understand that an immediate transportation of concepts and valid definitions in the severe field of physics speculations in different environments can cause some problems at least of consistency.

But this is positive if we see it as an increase of the limits of language validity. But how it is possible to extend concepts out of one's existence world, when we know that even in the whole of relevance exist some undecidable sentences? After that the undertermination principle was surmounted with enormous labour, we relapse inexorably in cruel limitations of the Godel's Theorem.

But, as well as the Heisenberg's Principle shows the limits and the contradictions that derive from wanting to transfer directly - without any verifications of compatibility - concepts valid for the macroscopic world in the microscopic one - so different - the Godel's Theorem deprives us of the last great certitude: the separation between the rational: Mathematics, and the non-rational: Art.

It is not so easy to surmount the difficulties derived from the apparent absence of the first points. In Physics we learned to live together with concepts distant from common sense, and then why shouldn't they be so?. In Mathematics we got the reassuring certitude that the scientific research will never have an end.

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. But it is true, and I believe so, that the most important thing is the way and not the goal, the discussion of formulas, of codification, of definitions, is after all more important than the subject of the research itself.

The Art & Science does not exist, but it is fundamental to talk about it.

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

Nobody knows its exact dimension, but it is possible that his entropy, and his energy also, is potentially very big. The connections are more important of the content.

PLEXUS as entropy and therefore as information.

Piero della Francesca as the vision of the Global Man.

1492 not as the death of Piero, but as the year of Lorenzo dei Medici.

The political vision as a means that allows information to have the power and the duty to circulate without any filter.

If this is urged by PLEXUS, it is not essential to give it a closed codification.

The Pupil asks: Master, is it possible to define PLEXUS?

The Master answers:

PLEXUS is in you.

PLEXUS is out of you.

One of these answers is undecidable.

September 1st, a week before Sarajevo.

Paper "*Global Navigations*", published in the booklet *The Well Being in the XXIst Century*, Cagliari, by the Interdepartmental Well Being Center of the University of Cagliari, 1995.

Global Navigations. A name that inspires spaces, borders and possible targets. A name that represents a step in the evolution of an attempt to compare different cultures and peoples. Any of them with a proper character, to obtain a vision more complete to solve some problems always present with their fascinating complexity. The big discovers and the reached aims make confident in a possible progress of all the social components through a progressive improvement of our way of living. But if an insight of the new poverty fixes one dollar as a daily resource of billion people today, with which false security is it possible to face the solution of an equal distribution of the richness when enormous differences concern the lives of a lot of people.

The methods, the weapons the determinate will to act can and must come from the right components though of as critical consciousness of the society. First among them the University, for the knowledge that should represent and for the mixing of cultural relationships that could realise. Art should have the same importance if we think that only with a complete connection of reasons and feelings it is possible to realise unthinkable projects.

For Art and Science is written on the main entrance of the Cooper Union School of Architecture in New York, and the memory goes to the speech about the freedom of slaves by Abraham Lincoln. In the same sense of this speech, supported by reason for a fair human cause, the research trail of the right instruments to modify and to interpret the reality around us must be based on a scenario that can change name, and from PLEXUS we can arrive to Well Being, but must maintain coherently the route that through tracings in the mind and in the time not always linear, takes to the definition of the proper responsible role in the life.

Paper "*Mail Computer Serpent*," published in Passport for Plexus Serpent, Cagliari, Celt Editions, 1987.

A system which transmits information without intermediaries, conditioning, or censure by any power whatever, where a fact may be presented as it was intended by its conceiver, free from encumbering interpretative explanations - this is without a doubt the most productive weapon against the frustrating solitude of every author.

And the system does exist: a network of computers which connects the knowledge-producing centers of the whole world. It can be the most useful way to not only exchange data but to close the gap and make ties stronger between all those interested in culture-related work.

One of the most wonderful experiences during the Plexus Meeting in July was meeting artists already "met" through the electronic mail system - the VAX at Cagliari's Department of Physics. There were people from DAX - Digital Art Exchange of Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, along with poets who had transmitted ancient legends from Australia, while Kassel and Wales were on the line. And all this in Gavoi, Barbagia (Sardinia).

The world can be smaller, not only in the field of Science, but, and perhaps with better results, in the field of Art as well.

From an unpublished paper "*Paradox*," 1989, Physics Department of University of Cagliari, Sardinia.

Any serious consideration of PLEXUS must take into account the distinction between the objective reality, which is independent of any theory, and the physical concepts with which the theory operates."

Why to use a fundamental article at the basis of the unsolved questionable dispute between the probabilistic exponents of the Copenhagen School, and the deterministic scientists, Einstein *et al.*, to introduce a discussion concerning PLEXUS? To gain credibility, for example. And because of the intimate fashion that I see looking to problems involving few definite positions and many possible developments able to augment our desire to implement connections between different domains of knowledge.

The most exciting and sometime appealing question I have ever heard in these two years of activity in PLEXUS concerns my position as scientific entity in the not-ever-clear artistic movement. Generally, - What is PLEXUS? and what is your position in it? - is a very intriguing statement, mainly because of the complexity of the answer.

I have tried many times to avoid a clear definition, but a night, forced by Sandro, a kind of equation came out in the form:  $PLEXUS = k_B \ln \frac{1}{2}$

There is a strong influence in this late-night output due to my old love for Boltzmann and for the implication that the true formula, where  $PLEXUS = S$ , the entropy of the system, had for the developments of Physics in many directions. It is very easy to connect the statement to many concepts in some way related to PLEXUS:

- i) there is the sense of the whole system as composed by separate but important parts: the artist in the first person;
- ii) there is the answer concerning the system as open or not, and the consequent entropy increment, with or without critical filters;
- iii) there is the close connection with the freedom of and in communication, Shannon relations of 1948 defining information as the difference of entropy before and after a message, and PLEXUS concerns also information;
- iv) there is in general the relationship between order and disorder;
- v) there is something of artistic in the definition of non-deterministic entities, in a sense exciting as von Neuman said on the term entropy related to information: "...no one knows what entropy really is, so in a debate you will always have the advantage.";
- vi) PLEXUS needs creative concepts, and with logical Ralston matrices also a little of statistical mechanics may aid to increase the number of connective sensations among us."

From a letter to David W. Ecker, Cagliari, March 13, 1990:

Dear David,

It is a pleasure for me to continue our long-distance dialogue on some common arguments of interest. In a sense, PLEXUS means connections and transmission of knowledge. In particular, remembering once more the absolute necessity to connect our places of work by computer electronic mail, I want to continue to play with the Black Box.

First of all, we must give a definition of it.

The Black Box has been created in order to survive. To survive against the complexity of the problems that made uncontrolled the route toward a common goal. To survive against the egoism of many of the participants to the project. To survive against the responsibility of the ambitious target, more or less future. To survive against the fragmentation of the different objectives of PLEXUS.

In this way, the Black Box, represents a quiet place created to discuss the situation according to a scientific method.

But, is it possible to do it? Clearly not. To go back to play, I think that it is denied by arguments based on Godel considerations. To be clear, for the fact that the Black Box is a superstructure of PLEXUS, but all of us are contemporary in the two. And seems that the process should go to infinity in creating spirally involved superstructures. It is impossible to assume a position totally external, in physical and in human sense, that could allow a scientific, unperturbed and unperturbing vision of this - but not only this - reality. This is a problem concerning the thesis work of Sandro too. His job is practically impossible to be brought to a definite end for his intimate involution in the problem. It is like a kind of symbiotic process between PLEXUS and Sandro that makes hard to individuate the subject and the object of the analysis. And this is strongly exciting. It resembles some situations in the interactive process of the measure, according the quantum mechanics, of microscopic entities.

Now, how to solve the problem?

In physics we proceed by putting in an organized way the results of the experimental tests. For the Black Box we need, first of all, to create a chronological order in order to fix some well defined coordinates. And this is what you suggest for the Sandro's thesis. All the possible developments should come as a consequence of this first task. We must then collect our energies to meet together to find the right answers for our problem.

### William Parker

Paper "*Introduction*," from the Bill Collector Newsletter, republished in the Plexus Passport, New York, 1992, by José Rodriguez.

It is the role of the artist to dance, sing, shout and whisper about all that is wonderful, beautiful and majestic. To mirror and project the present and future, to tell us the stories inside little childrens' hearts (giving us a view beyond the horizon). Communicating by the language of stone, wood, wool and language of happiness, sadness and joy.

It is the role of the artist to incite political, social and... spiritual revolution. To awaken us from our sleep and never let us forget our obligations as human beings.... To light the fire of human compassion. When this inner flame is burning man is uplifted to another state, his vision and sense are doubled he sees, hears and feels things he never did before. The heat of the earth, the cry of living beings. This fire is stoked by conviction, caring... communication with others.

The idea is to live strongly within this vision without compromises even after being met by a cold grey world that could care less about vision, a world that makes insensitivity and murder of idealism and individualism a standard.

It is the role of the artist to become a human being to see that the only art is the art of living, the artist must quickly make the transformation to human being and in the same breath come to realize he or she is a vehicle through which light passes. We can flow and sing with this reality.

Being a great artist is not enough. One must be obsessed with the vision of life. Art must transform to reality to a healing ritual a ceremony of the inner voice that says the only tradition is the tradition of life and living things, the tradition of the selfbeing created each moment. The masterpiece must constantly be created. Every year more creative beings have gone into the business of entertainment to make a dollar. They make their music weaker for the sake of popularity, why not make it stronger for the sake

popularity? America was founded and is run on a palette of untruths and illusions in every area of life (War is thought of as real while peace is a dream).

Art can clarify life or it can help to reconfirm these lies. It's not...a matter of just staying alive and existing but living as full creative beings, beings who take the step not when it is safe or out of survival but as a process of living. The way trees grow and the way flowers just appear out of nowhere. Most books and gestures about music, dance, painting, film, and the other art forms have rarely been written by the artist themselves...Art as life in America is defined and...controlled by either the capitalist or the scientist, the curiosity seekers who play games with life. To these people art is an ornament they look and promote music and dance that is technically polished, slick and does everything art is supposed to be according to the guidelines of the 80's. They never really believe that art can change the heart of man. To the theoretician and the intellectual art is never expected to be reality, this is what makes art, art. They will not accept the idea that life is more important than art and that for any creative work to be valid on the same level as life that work must sing and swing from an unearthly reality. All the controlling factors of the world of the arts are a mirror of the controlling powers of the world (AMERICA). The European Western capitalist. The Afro-American creative music since its reception in the United States, has been uprooted from ritual and healing to the status of entertainment. Watered down, raped and pillaged by the money vendors and the so called jazz lovers to meet their own needs. The black musician provides the creativity, the capitalist producer controls it, creating an industry off of not the meat of the music but off of the embellishment presenting the music on lesser terms making it more palatable. The real music as any real art causes change, it asks man to question and not to live with lies and injustices. We have entered the 80's with our eyes still red from the sleepiness of the 70's. America is a deep sleep, the revolution of today consists of machines replacing people and people acting like machines, dancing robots and digital watches. This is the age of electronics and instant death. Acoustic human energy is frowned upon, everyone is trying to take the easy way out. No longer can the creative musician sit back and let others define him, he is labelled and catalogued, interviewed, produced, recorded, bought and sold by people with tin ears and souls. If the musician believes in life then he must define himself and not be manipulated. The Bill Collector is a newsletter written by the artist who wishes to define and share his existence with others, in what is once again a move toward self-determination.

Frank Pio

Transcript of the interview made by the researcher in New York, in 1994. It is approved by Frank Pio.

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.

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 the 2 week of events of the Plexus Black Box there was a community-based participation.

### Rolando Politi

Unpublished paper "*Plexus Art Cartel*", New York, May 1987.

Sandro, organize Plexus like a Club Card Carring.

The Board is international, legalize it in Switzerland, Panama or Bahamas.

Information is electronic (Hard copy optional) through an Art/Science Network

Your Board invests into the frame, the cards, etc.

Plexus Board is not-for profit, because you are fostering a science and culture co-operation network.

In other words what it costs you to set the system is what you should ask for from a variety of "fund benefactors."

The Plexus Card Members must pay a fee - to gain access to the network.

The artist in the First Person must make an investment just like investments are made in paper and pencils, but you must give them something better than xerox copies and loose sheets.

You will be successful in selling many plastic Plexus Cards, once you organize the information subjects for quick access.

Now here is the Big Point.

You as the Plexus Board must establish an international legal and copyright monitoring unit.

The information should be accepted in the bank unless it is screened (copyright) and verified to be the true and original source of that specific artist/scientist in the first person. You will get the trust of the card members by establishing such a unit.

Also if any work is sold as a result of the network, Plexus is entitled to a % of the profit (agreement to be signed before one becomes a card member).

Also events staged as a result of Plexus Networking must have the Plexus name clearly in evidence.

You don't want a fee for events because you are needed to generate sales and they may show profits or losses.

But you are entitled to fee for sales of work by the artist in the first person. Your Network will put in direct contact sellers and buyers.



Unpublished paper “*Proposal for Plexus International as a Sweat Equity Cartel*” made in New York, on February 10, 1992, by Rolando Politi, Plexus 43, New York.

Plexus International as a “Sweat Equity Cartel of Art” is a beautiful creative tool for a paternity of “the artists in the first person” to exchange his own work without filters or barriers.

The “Open Market” eventually will recognize the Cartel, particularly when the issue is the international debt of the Third World vs. the First World, and the role of the artists in the first person for a world route correction in the use of human resources.

The currency unit of exchange in the cartel is the “Plexonian” which is equivalent to one ECU (European Currency Unit), one dollar is about one and half ECU.

The Plexonian was designed by Micaela Serino in Rome in 1991 as her contribution to the development of the “Plexus Black Bag” project.

The Plexonian money will be printed in a limited edition to support the Cartel and the voyage of the Elisabeth from Sardinia to Gorée, Dakar. The Plexonians will be certified by Plexus International Storage and delivered to Plexus Dakar in order to be presented to the Minister of Culture of Senegal for the approval of the Government in support of the Plexus project of the opening of Plexus World Art Bank in Gorée, Dakar.

To get some amount of Plexonians it is necessary to donate to the Plexus Cartel of “Sweat Equity” an equivalent amount of value in labour or art works, in reference to building the Art Bank.

Example:

Sandro, Plexus 23s, buys a “Robotcap 3,” an original certified Plexus art work by Rolando, Plexus 43, for 1000 Plexonians.

“Robotcap 3” will receive the certificate of original Plexus work by Plexus International Storage after the Storage has received from Plexus 43 all documentation of that specific art work and verified with the monitoring unit that the member has full credit for what presented as true source of it.

Plexus 23s has available an amount of Plexonians against a quantity of labour made by him in support of the Cartel’s activities.

Plexus 23s pays in cash 1000 Plexonians to Plexus 43.

Rolando will have credit inside the network of the Cartel to buy for an amount of 1000 Plexonians a quantity of products or labours listed in the “Plexus Black Bag,” the shopping tool for the members of the cartel and diffused through internet within the “Plexus Black Box”.

Plexus members will receive a plastic card membership with a personal ID. number, which will allow to have access to the Cartel’s activities and to receive the last news with a list of the new works offered and of what was sold, with relative bids (quotations) in Plexonian currency.

How to become a member of the Plexus cartel?

Unpublished paper “*Plexus International Network*”, made in New York, in 1992, by Plexus 43 in collaboration with Plexus 23s.

Plexus International Network is the tool we use to create “value” and is available only to Plexus members.

Einstein theorised: “Energy is neither created nor destroyed, it is only transferred” and you as the artist in the first person must initially invest “creative time” measured with “sweat equity” into the network and reinvest the “values” (Plexonian money) received for the initial work back into the network. You

and each and every member keeps on reinvesting into the Web until such time as your work is demanded by the outside market and you decide to exchange (sell) it for hard currency (real money). At this point in time your work leaves the network and you give to Plexus a % of the hard currency. (Sometimes, there could be as many as three layers of commissions of % to be involved in this selling process)

These commissions from the different entities involved will be in exchange for the value created by the network in launching your work.

Plexus Art Bank, in Gorée, Dakar, will issue the Plexonian money in exchange of a 1% or 2% commission of its face value.

One Plexonian will be equivalent to an hard currency.

Plexus Black Bag, in Rome, is the marketing arm of the network and will receive a commission to be determined individually and when “works” are sold for hard currency through this arm.

Plexus International Passport, in New York, is the newsletter of the network. In each issue, the newsletter will list works offered and sold including the list of their latest Plexonian value. This system will work like the “Bid/Ask System” used in all the counter financial markets.

It is important to remember that between members you can only trade in Plexonians, no hard currency. Continuous trade between members is therefore always encouraged. Obviously any work will have ultimately a realistic chance to be sold in the outside market if it achieves a magical balance between inside and outside market dynamics. It is important to remember also that you as “the artist in the first person” do really and truly control the entire toy mechanism. Trades and contributions of sweat equity and creative time will also be printed in this newsletter.

Plexus International Storage, in Cagliari, Sardinia, will certify and document your work as true and original. It will act as a screening agent. Documents and works can periodically be used to organize shows and travelling exhibitions. In essence the Storage will act as a promotional tool to generate interest and value.

These four bodies are the major pillars upon which this international network can be built.

You can leave the network at any time. Just do not renew your membership and removed your work from the Storage and therefore from “Plexus Black Bag”. You cannot however have back the value of your sweat equity contribution out of the network in Plexonian or in hard currency. You will leave it as your contribution to the network while you were member enjoying all benefits that such a membership brought to you.

### Andrea Portas

Translation of the written recollection made in Cagliari in 1994.

Plexus: Some Remarks.

Gaetano Brundu was the first in February 1987 to talk to me about Plexus; he was organizing with some artists an art show inside a house in the district of Castello in Cagliari.

The theme was Bring your Serpent and also I was invited to carry my serpent. I started in this way to be concerned with the logic of Plexus and of its revolutionary theories on the world of contemporary art.

Some months after Plexus organized (Gavoi, Nuoro, July 1987) a big international happening in Sardinia, this was a good opportunity to undertake a series of contacts with the artworld and to change air from the routine of the artistic scenery of the island.

The event got a good success of critic and interest and it was thought that it could become the beginning of a permanent and lasting relationship among the artists in the first person of a group which might grow gradually in progress with the time, a kind of movement of ideas. During these years the dates of Plexus were several, we went through Carloforte, Cagliari, Dakar, Roma, New York, and again Cagliari; various the covered routes by the ship of the slaves of art, also in ideas and in artistic ways.

Plexus: Motivations.

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.

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.

Plexus: Time+Art.

...One apple is less than two, but one is better than nothing. Why through it away?

In November 1992 a strange parcel of yellow ochre colour was delivered to me, the sender was an artist of New York Rolando Politi. I met Rolando here in Cagliari in October during the conference "The Well Being in the XXI Century."

The parcel contained a letter in which Rolando proposed to me an open collaboration, regarding some points of current interest in the New York area: Homeless Society, Recycling Art, Culture Jamming, Sex Line, etc.; and various information about the life in the metropolis. For it he sent me a series of significant fliers and posters pulled out from NYC walls, inviting me to join the operation "Dont Dump Drains to River," it was required the creation of a stamp with this call to not pollute and the image of a fish splashing in a river. Everything had to be printed next to the sewers on the streets of his city. It was a clear operation of Sidewalk-Art and I was already engaged with similar things, therefore I accepted well this invitation to a collaboration so interesting and precise.

In the same period Gaetano Brundu who undertook the weight of Plexus International Storage asked me if I could think to do an installation for the month of December 1992 or January 1993. I accepted also this invitation with enthusiasm and I got the idea that the two demands were somehow in relation each other.

I started to work to the two projects, gathering a good number of information and I arrived to the conclusion that there were the condition to create a network of information for all artists in the first person, a small network, an art subnetwork of Plexus, "Time+Art," ... time of art, time for art, time to art, time+art.

It was in act the first project of collaboration between artists of Cagliari and New York, the first Art+Walk of Time+Art; the big mother was Plexus and it was December 3, 1992.

Plexus: Why Time+Art

I already told which are the real problems of Plexus today: the poor collaboration among components; the absolute incapacity to manage consistently the organization of events; the lack of programming also among individuals; the sufficiency of relations and contacts, etc.

It is necessary a check up, we need to reorder ideas; to make a control: is perhaps sick Plexus? Does it not feel well? What is happening? But just now?

No! Plexus is not ill or anyway it is not a serious patient, it needs only a mouthful of air. It is possible to say that there was originated a kind of elite which is obstructing a firm program or strategy, and it is joined in certain cases with very powerful institutional centers, arriving to pollute the coherence and adhesion of some projects with the social tissue, legitimating justifications, after not related determinate choices, clearly without consistence.

Therefore it was proposed by few but firm artists to pursue with strength the logic of the group, in place and in time, to collaborate actively, to propose ideas and projects, to articulate it in different lines of research, production centers, to promote artistic events, to work to involve other figures etc., to show to exist as group.

Plexus: Time+Art...What is...

Time+Art born as a network of art, finalized more than to the simple production of works of Mail-Art, of which anyway already has a large collection in its center of Cagliari and New York, to support a link among artists of different countries, with the purpose to create collaborations with exhibition or research goals.

Today Time+Art is established as a not profit cultural organization - Visual Arts Project - and it has expanded the range of its competencies. It was able to define better its contacts with foreign countries and has available a large exposition space to organize alternative shows or debates and conferences on art.

Time+Art has the purpose to become a point of reference for the development of visual arts in Sardinia, through the organization and management of shows for students of art schools, of young artists, group shows, happenings, performances, and other art events in Sardinia and abroad.

Jose Rodriguez

Transcript from the first round table “Cultural Navigation and the Community: The Lower East Side,” of the NYU Summer Institute of Living Traditions in Art, conducted by the Hon. Dennis DeLeon, Commissioner of Human Rights of the City of New York, Barney Building Summer 1993.

DeLeon: Jose, have you ever tried to bridge, you've been involved in artistic frame work in the Lower East Side some time now. Have you ever tried to make a bridge that gentleman was talking about?

Rodriguez: Sometimes I call it 'discovery of fear'. You're right to fear the others, the others different from you. So many times it's surprising when you see an old Jewish lady and you wish to help her to cross the street but it is not possible because the idea that she has, called fear, "Oh, no these people are rub you".

The same level we have too from Latino to Black people, to understand that because we use the word white, "They're white" by saying that, we're separating them out. Sure people have strange idea, but it's what we called here the fear we always spoke about it. The fear is constancy. What we try to do in CUANDO and with PLEXUS is to fight racism and we are very active.

People don't like to talk about it, people don't like to mention, but it's reality. And reality is that in this city we're fighting constantly against fear, we're trying in our community to establish a way in which all these diversities can find a way to talk, to communicate to be together. We are against that fear.

I work in Brooklyn. I'm working in a child and family administration. I have to win that. We're fighting that fear which is our main problem. We're with fear in our community, we try to fight, sometimes we're able to accomplish something sometimes we can't, but that's a part of what it's all about.

DeLeon: Tell us about PLEXUS.

Rodriguez: PLEXUS started ten years ago, from a cosmopolitan confront by seeing this diversity of cultures. PLEXUS has a goal something called “cultural navigation” and what is trying to do in all these ten years is to make a bridge between those different cultures and also make to see the artist as a person of the community and not to see the artist production within his cultural context. The Artists in the first person are the main concern. Plexus also try to points out that the living tradition is what defines community. Art defines the community and the artist defines his community and the community defines art and this has been PLEXUS's reason to build in Lower East Side the collaboration with CUANDO. The collaboration started in 1985 and it began to develop an international house of cultures of CUANDO where different cultures come together and try to understand each other.

An other level is what has been call experimental and avant-garde. The Avant-Garde understanding was that the artist is a social class in the community. What defines community and what defines the artists is the work within their community. We don't want to be an institution like Metropolitan Museum , MOMA, I call that Art: Pension Art. We can see it. We are talking about art in the living scene, the permanent scene. That is a concept that is reality, PLEXUS art is living scene, a community living scene; a community culture is a community living scene, what you get in museum and galleries is dead body.

DeLeon: Well preserved.

Rodriguez: Yes, well preserved. I'm talking about that neither CUANDO neither PLEXUS neither Miguel we don't need a resting place for dead body. We're interesting in living art and living art is

living community. That's what happens, you're in this summer institute, you're coming to our community to see what we do. Don't come to see dead body. Come to see and research us as living body, people, art, painting, singing, feeling, experimenting, that's an invitation that we're making to you. Come and see us, as a living Art

If you go to see Metropolitan, Lincoln Center, you pay your money there. That's dead. If you want to see alive, come to us.

Paper "*The Voyage of the Elisabeth: Cultural Navigation and Community, Art, Reconciliation, and Well Being*," presented at the fourth roundtable of NYU Summer Institute of Living Traditions, October 1993, New York.

Cultural Navigation: Plexus International was created or funded by a Group of individuals, all of them coming from an cosmopolitan cultural experience living at that moment in the City of New York and were been confronted with the reality of dealing or relating to a multiplicity of cultures or realities, which simultaneously were assessing the world in terms of what that world and their culture meant to the other worlds and their cultural realities.

Been confronted with these other cultures assess their European culture with a sort of accusatory discourse they set up to develop a bridge among cultures.

This "bridge" couldn't be base on the perception of a dominant culture, this bridge has to evolve from a perspective of "fraternal" encounter and gear towards a creative synthesis: this creative synthesis is to be base on the following premises: the Artist in the First person and the possibility of developing a cultural synthesis.

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 artefact 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, civilize and "savage" culture. And most important this definition is done by limiting who would enjoy and enhance their subjectivity by an act of appropriation of the cultural production of the society. They define society in terms of their dominant privileges and define the self-esteem of the component of Society.

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 allow 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 autodefinition will allow the community to regain the possibility of knowledge. Not a knowledge base in the domination of nature and as such a relation base in the domination of one subject to another, but a knowledge base in enhancing the creative subject.

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

By overcoming this relation of master-slave the Artist in the First Person and the community are able to start to participate in their own definition.

This participation allows the community to develop its own language, its own forms of expression, its own forms of playful experience - its own theater! Not a theater of repetition but one of creation. The community cultural production won't become artifacts of museums, galleries - artefacts of the Pantheon! To be observed and researched, but will become expression of life. The community won't be anymore a death body but an intense experience that would be define as life.

Plexus understands cultural navigation as the only alternative which will allow the cultural production to be an energetic and living creation. As such 'culture' won't be the patrimony of the Pantheon.

The only possible way of defining culture is as a living organism. In this sense, the community and the Artist in the First Person perceive culture and its by-products as creation of the present. The community will be able to define its culture as the process of the becoming, never as Artefacts of the Pantheon but as present that may become the future but never the past.

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.

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.

In its 10 years of existence Plexus has understood his action praxis as a social praxis exercised in the community. As such the living culture is an experience within the confiments of the community - the only place where the artist can become the Artist in the First Person - is in the community were the permanent present - the permanent becoming- happens.

This intensive experience of Plexus has been exercised in two levels:

One of those has been the praxis of art in the best tradition of the Avant-garde creativity. Avant-garde understood as the artist regaining his social praxis and regaining his First Person - the artist been able to define its creativity, been able to name his art. This Avant-garde praxis is a continuation of a tradition which took the responsibility of confronting art as another rational institution of the dominant power structures.

Plexus International has understood their Avant-garde praxis as a praxis of the form of the autonomous-logocentric art. But as a praxis that liberates art from its role as an institution as another commodity.

The Avant-garde praxis of Plexus has to be accepted as the negation of art as an institution, as the elaboration of the artist context within the community context.

Because of this Avant-garde tradition, the other element of Plexus intensive experience is in the maintenance of the 'living tradition in art.'

This living tradition in art is the one that defines the community as the space of the living culture.

Culture becoming the beholder of magic, the beholder of shadows, in the state of permanent becoming.

The living tradition in art is in ultimate sense what defines a community, it is by keeping the oral tradition, the passing from generation to generation the essence of the community, the essence of culture - culture as a living experience.

The living tradition in art is also the act of self-definition of the self-image of a culture of a community.

In terms of the dominant rationality, the maintenance of a living tradition in art prevents the rational conscious industry from defining the community. Prevent the rational dominant structures of power from developing the discourse of the 'low culture,' of defining culture as a 'death body' as an object of the Pantheon.

It also reminds the Avant-garde tradition that is within then the possibility of defining its own creativity, of challenging art as an institution.

The other expression of Plexus praxis is their conception of the International Community House of Cultures, this been the more permanent project of Plexus.

Plexus has projected itself from its insertion as a network of cultural enclaves.

In this sense, the Storage in Cagliari, Sardinia, is one of the 'stone' of the Plexus network; the House of the Slave Art in Goree, Senegal, becomes the other. Then Plexus Amsterdam and Plexus Rome in the European "plateau," and finally the network is amplified with the International Community House of All Cultures in new York, a project that Plexus has been working in association with CUANDO Civic and Cultural Center since 1985.

The Plexus network becomes the structure that insurance possibility of the Well Being.

The Well Being becomes the finality or by-product of the concept of Reconciliation.

Plexus understands that the goal of Reconciliation of the cultures is concretized within the living experience of a new cultural synthesis.

To understand the experience of Reconciliation is to understand that the only way that Reconciliation becomes a concrete reality is through the historical experiment of a new cultural synthesis.

The new cultural synthesis becomes the living culture as a permanent present as the eternal becoming of a cultural production: the synthesis of cultures: European, African, American, Indian, etc., into a synthesis or pluralism of cultures, by which the individual becomes the living subjects, the permanent becoming in freedom.

Transcript of the interview made in New York, in November 1994.



From the Portorican cultural tradition from which I come from, I was educated that the artists are the first voices speaking on behalf of the community, and that the artists are not separated from the community in which they belong. The artists are significant components of their society. The different communities and artists, involved in the history of Plexus, were both interactive significant components of the Plexus development.

In a historical grounding of Plexus, there are certain elements which have to be established to understand how Plexus Black Box became a metaphor of the cultural growing of Plexus as a community-based art organization.

In the Plexus historical growing it is possible to identify different phases of development.

The first phase started in the end of 1981, in New York, when Sandro Dernini, Giancarlo Schiaffini and other Italian artists, thought to create a loose organization with the idea to open a space in which the artists "in the first person" could be the coproducers of their own art activities.

This original idea took shape in 1982, in a performance space in the Chelsea area of New York, named Plexus, dedicated to the interaction of the different art forms of expression, without any necessary involvement of the community, on the traditional model art for the sake of art.

The second phase began in 1984 when Plexus, lost his performance space, and moved in the Lower East Side of New York, at the Shuttle Theater.

In the Lower East Side it was a radical cultural and social tradition through which Plexus began its second phase.

This second stage could be named the Plexus art-opera phase as a collective art form of expression to perform collectively their egocentric ideas. It was still part of the autonomous concept of art but started to get involved with people from the community like Sarah Farley, a local leader of an homesteaders community, Miguel Pinero and Miguel Algarin, originators of the Nuyoricans Poets Café and Williams Parker, leader of Sound Unity a large community jazz collective. They were groups with a different history and expressing the alienation of their community in their own languages and defending their presence in the struggle of the Lower East Side under an heavy cultural and real estate gentrification pressure. This encounter started to change the entire personality of Plexus by understanding that art was not only about their individual art expression but to integrate their art forms into the community life in which they were placed.

This move Plexus to grow in a third phase which it was called "co-operas" in which, in 1987-1988, the artists started to think also in collective art forms.

Plexus was forced to start to develop what the historical art avantgarde left to be developed in the direction of the relation between power and community.

This development brings to this last recent phase of Plexus, started in 1989 to the present, which it is called the reconciliation stage, in which Plexus got involved in politics with academic institutions.

In this context, the concept of Plexus Black Box grew as an educational community-based art project, in a broader cultural sense, creating channels of communication among different communities involved in Plexus activities to express their art experiences in connecting themselves with other cultural diversities and to educate the young generations in this multicultural diversity to understand what is art within and out their own culture, and to accept that the world, the society and any community is made by a diversity of many kind groups or cultural experiences. It will help to define themselves.

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 Black Box has its roots in the historical art avantgardes, in the surrealistic ideas of Antonin Artaud, and in the concept of a responsibility of the artists as intellectuals in the transformation of the society by Antonio Gramsci.

## Barnaby Ruhe

Paper “*PLEXUS*”, published in the Plexus Passport, 1992, New York.

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 “dematerialization” 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 Roschartz 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.

Art shapes itself around a symbol. Plexus takes a shape that is of the moment, yet reflective of the undercurrents of the ‘zeitgeist’ of the age.

This is possible because the second phase functions as an ink blot, allowing within the ambiguity the surfacing of associations from the (collective/community) unconscious.

The shamanic journey invariably engages a ‘trance’ phase that integrates ‘reality’ with the experiences surfacing at the second phase.

Groups engaging a common mind or mood have been documented.

Finding that common esprit is not the reaction to orders from a leader, but discovered from within.

Hence the urgency of the metaphor as the activating ingredient in the Plexus art opera. Its very ambiguity serves to entrance the participants during the second phase of the ritual journey.

The metaphor is by necessity ambiguous, that is capable of multiple meanings. The dramatic metaphor collects the collective sentiment of the group whose minds are open ended.

## Frank Shifreen

Paper “*Modern Art & Commodity Exchange*,” published in Plexus Newsletter 1988, New York, by Plexus International Art Urban Forum, Inc.

Art’s separation from the process of material production has enabled it to demystify the reality reproduced in this process. Art challenges the monopoly of the established reality to determine what is “real,” and it does so by creating a fictitious world which is nevertheless more “real than reality itself. (Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*.)

Art has a dual nature in our society. It is both an exchange of ideas, of revelations about which lives within the confines of our economic system the way any other manufactured product does.

Many will agree that the current state of American art criticism is poor. There is a hidden agenda in that key secret relationships exist between critics, commercial galleries, and museums. Some critics not only get paid by the magazines they work for and the dealers whose shows they review, but also get commissions from works they sell privately. Even without this blatant monetary compensation, the system as it stands is incestuous, encouraging favoritism and toadyism, making it extremely hard for the majority of artists to emerge through the traditional magazine/gallery/museum critical network. We all know many good artists who do not show or sell, and I will stress that there are many honest critics who are also prisoners of the system, receiving only a pittance for their efforts.

Given this situation, we have begun to focus on each other and the alternative art society that we have created. We include such organizations as: Colab, Group Material, Plexus, or O.I.A., and alternative spaces such as ABC No Rio, Fashion Moda, Alternative Museum, and the Knitting Factory.

Many of the younger East Side galleries have also been created to fulfill the need for artists to show their work and for the public to see it. It has become necessary for us to bypass the system which seems to have a severe case of hardening of the arteries. We should celebrate the enormously vital younger artist and enter into dialogue with all.

In the postmodernist theory known as critical regionalism, theorists respond to the need for the development of local autonomy. This encourages the growth of many styles and schools, it abolishes cultural imperialism, and it allows for local answers to local problems. Within the Theory of Evolution it is said that development and progress result from mutation in protected, isolated pockets. These mutations eventually find their niches in spite of the pressures of competition and natural selection. This is my metaphor for disenfranchised artists. "Natural selection" is the free economy. After they are nurtured, these radical developments can emerge fully formed, ready to compete with the quotidian. The difficulties of being an artist in our society are incredible. There is a great need for support networks between artists. There is also a need for criticism not tied to the old system. We hope to ease the burden of the perennial artist's dilemma. This magazine is for artists and by artists, and we will serve our community by the freest exchange of ideas and information.

Paper "*Open Call*," by Frank Shifreen, Lorenzo Pace, Larry Stanley, Hope Carr, Joi Huckaby, published in Plexus Newsletter 1988, New York, by Plexus International Art Urban Forum, Inc.

We resent the use of slave images in any literature, promotional material or propaganda when the use of such images results in the trivialization or simplification of the real African slave experience. More often than not, the Plexus literature, posters, flyers and invitation (a considerable amount) use images of slaves in bondage or in transit as cargo.

It is offensive to trivialize history for the sake of artistic argument. Slavery and images of slavery are not merely metaphors. Slavery is the real experience of many hundreds of thousands of people. One cannot use a historical or current event as a vehicle for information without considering certain larger implications and slavery is central to both the American and African experiences.

Certainly, there are similarities between the art market and the slave market, that in a disturbing way art has been reduced to a commodity like slaves: something to be bought and sold. However, there is a difference between comparison and equation.

If Plexus as a movement stands for freedom of art, freedom of interdisciplinary communication, and freedom of the artists in the first person, then these political tenets must be conveyed without

demonstrating the all too common patronising air of most radical/liberal movements. Evoking images of slaves without, or at least acknowledging, the impact is objectionable.

Before certain metaphors are used in any Plexus propaganda such use should be examined and the producer of such propaganda should first consider the potential social ramifications the use of that image may have.

### Youssouph Traore

Translation from French by the researcher of the paper presented as opening presentation of Plexus International in Dakar, December 23, 1987.

Gentlemen of the Community, of the Government and of the diplomatic rappresentances.

Dear guests, dear artists, ladies and gentlemen,

we thank you to have answer to our call so numerous. We thank you to have left your family duties for this occasion which is built on your ancestral critic and generous disponibility towards all cultural horizons, formal and non formal.

I would like to present an artistic and scientific project, concerning patrical aspects and metaphors; it is the complex aspects of Plexus, conceptual denomination of this project.

Therefore, we will give you briefly his profile. In fact, 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 intedisciplinary 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. It is the place of the metaphor of the Serpent, understood as a multilateral mean of accelerated communication.

This is the brief presentation of Plexus International. Dear audience, thank you to have kindly follow me. I did not ignore that the kindness is in the absolute tradition of Senegal.

