



## *RELICS*

### **EDITED**

MAYA ROSE BARRERA LOEB

### **QUERIES**

SIMONETTA MORO

### **INSTALLATION**

NATASHA MAGARIEL

### **NARRATIVES**

VICTOR KERLOW

STEVEN NYUHN

### **ROBOTICS**

ALEX RICKARD

### **POSTER**

MARCO BARRERA

### **INTERVIEW**

JOHANNA HICKEY

STEPHEN ZERBE

### **LOVE**

SEAN LEONARD

### **SPECIAL THANKS**

JASMIN VENUS SOTO

THE RELICS JOURNAL HAS BEEN CRAFTED WITH THIS INTENTION, TO CREATE A DIALOGUE FOR ARTISTS WHO COLLECT IDEAS, INFORMATION, SMALL OBJECTS AND PHOTOS. IN THE PROCESS OF COLLECTING, WE CREATE OUR OWN WORKS. THIS JOURNAL IS A WAY TO RECORD AND DOCUMENT MOMENTS, STORIES OR ANECDOTES FROM ONE'S LIFE THAT REVEAL AN ARTIST'S THOUGHTS. RELICS CAN PROVIDE A LOCATION FOR PROSPECTIVE IDEAS OR PROJECTS. IT IS A PROJECT, IN ITSELF, THAT HAS ALREADY GONE THROUGH SEVERAL SHIFTS. USING THE MEDIUM OF PUBLICATION, I LOOK TO ALLOW MYSELF AND OTHERS A SPACE TO BE COMFORTABLE IN EXPRESSING IDEAS OR THOUGHTS THAT ARE IN THE PROCESS OF BEING FORMED OR COMPLETE. PERSONALLY, I OFTEN FIND MYSELF WITH IDEAS FOR PROJECTS BUT RESORT TO DISCARDING THEM. THIS JOURNAL IS A FORUM THAT CAN ENABLE TRANSITION AND MOVEMENT AS THE WORK THAT IS FEATURED, CONNECTS WITH BOTH ART AND DAILY LIFE. I HOPE YOU ENJOY THE WORK BY THE INDIVIDUALS THAT HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THIS FIRST ISSUE.

MAYA ROSE BARRERA LOEB

---

CONTACT RELICS AT RELICS.JOURNAL@GMAIL.COM OR RELICS - P.O. BOX 1387 - NEW YORK, NY, 10013

## SIMONETTA MORO

*WHAT ISSUES DO YOU THINK ARE MOST PRESSING AND RELEVANT TO CONTEMPORARY ART TODAY? IS THERE ONE DOMINANT THEME OR SET OF ISSUES, OR HAS GLOBALIZATION RENDERED SUCH POSSIBILITIES MOOT?*

While pondering these challenging and important questions, in the attempt to find a possible answer (among the many possible ones), I cannot fail to notice that the search for "issues" is a typical contemporary trait, one encouraged by art schools and institutions, and the art system as a whole. "Issue" is one of those interestingly multi-semantic English words: there is almost no equivalent in Italian, my native tongue, where many different translations would be necessary to express all its meanings. The subject, the matter, the question, the problem...art today likes to think of itself as complicated and problematic, because there is a sense that the world itself is more complicated and problematic. So, if there is something like a relevant issue that is specific to our time, and our time alone, this may well be that we think of art in terms of issues in the first place. The language with which we talk about art has changed as well as the forms through which art is manifested – or perhaps even more than those. Assuming thus that we are talking of issues related to philosophical matters – and not, for instance, the issue of selling one's work, or the issue of being famous, or the issue of subject-matter, or the issue of technique, I will attempt to (modestly) draft my idea of the art of our time beginning with the future, via the past.

"The art that will be useful in the future: A clear art, concise, free of rhetoric, which does not lie, which does not betray".

I came across this passage, after watching again *La Dolce Vita*, the movie by Fellini that became the icon of an era when it was released forty-nine years ago<sup>1</sup>. Marcello – the main character impersonated by Mastroianni – utters these words after hearing a poem by Iris Tree, but he obviously thinks of Morandi as well, whose painting was the subject of a previous disquisition. Almost fifty years later, we are now "the future" which the character foresees. Did we fulfill the promise? Or did we deny that vision? Is that idea of art still viable? And if so, where

are we in relation to that idea? Or, to use the words of a contemporary artist whom I regard as one of the most significant of our time, Ilya Kabakov (who, to be correct, should be quoted together with his wife Emilia, with whom he often collaborates): Where is our Place?

In the installation with the same title, produced in 2003, Ilya and Emilia Kabakov give a visible presence to an ontological and historical question, which no artist working today should ignore. In their words, "Everything is rather relative: both our position in the world, and in particular the art we exhibit now – that which is called contemporary. During another time, but in the same place, there was also art. But at that time it had pretensions of an eternal existence as an unchanging model. Now our "contemporary" time has come and has unexpectedly refuted that old art...But the old has not disappeared; it exists permanently, discrediting what the younger generation is doing today..."<sup>2</sup>

Where is our place? presupposes the loss of the centrality that was still possible in the "old world"; the post-modern drift created a void that posed the conditions for a new definition of art, the emergence of "new" centers, or foci, in the artistic panorama more and more internationalized, and for the reference models to be multiplied almost infinitely, with no apparent discrimination between high and low, good or bad, essential or superfluous, etc. But I'm digressing. What I think it's important in this example of the Kabakovs' installation, is the idea that we shift our vision from a horizontal one (the habitual one, symbolized by the black and white, or rather gray, photographs) to a vertical one, which will lead to the discovery of something exceptional in our everyday reality. The vertical gaze "is an elevated gaze, directed to the heavens, a road that leads us away from daily life towards something else...towards the cosmos that surrounds us."<sup>3</sup> Maybe what the Kabakovs are suggesting is that there is a reality beyond the limits of the ceiling



*LA DOLCE VITA* / FEDERICO FELLINI / 1960

that is trying to speak to us; there is a world beyond our immediate, peculiar problems and narcissistic concerns. Maybe they are saying that the art of the past – the giants of which we can only see the bottom of their legs – is still trying to speak to us, and is inexorably part of our time, although we may not see it in these terms – or may not see it at all. Maybe they are saying that there is still room for an authentic experience of the self, one that incorporates what is beyond oneself; that there is room for the dream, the utopia and the vision.

At the same time, we are invited to look down to the ground, where another world is discernible, one belonging to the microscopic realm, which is also in danger of going unnoticed by our exhausted gaze, or worse, crushed by our careless feet.

This paying attention to everything surrounding us is an act of responsibility. It may be that the pressing issue of the art of our time has to deal with an ethical standpoint – something we may have forgotten, or left out of the debate for too long. It is possible, and even desirable, that young artists today will take up the challenge, and worry less about their immediate circumstances and more about fundamental problems that are likely to speak to generations to come. That these artists today will be the artists of the future; this is what I demand from art, and what I constantly seek through my work. -

SIMONETTA MORO is a painter and printmaker, and a professor of Visual Art at Eugene Lang College / The New School for Liberal Arts.

1. I wish to thank Mauro Aprile Zanetti for giving me the opportunity to refresh my memory and see this passage as well as the Morandi's painting in the film, in the context of a panel discussion for his book "La Natura Morta de La Dolce Vita" (Bloc-Notes Edition, Italian Institute of Culture of New York, 2008).

2. Ilya & Emilia Kabakov, *Where is Our Place?* (Charta, Milano, 2003), p.31.

3. Ilya Kabakov, *Public Projects or the Spirit of a Place* (Charta, Milano, 2001), p.75.