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lecture at

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for Omar Galliani's exhibition**

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The Unexpected and the Continuous

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The expression *mantra* knows its origin in the fusion of two Sanskrit words: *man*, which means *to think* and *tra* indicating the *use* or *passage*, *transformation*.

Those two words indicate us the mysterious prehistoric universe through Indo European's paths – an ensemble of languages disappeared about twenty thousand years ago. Thus, *man* appeared from **ma* whose unfolding in other words notably elucidate its complex net of meanings, all its deepness. *Mother*, *man*, *mar* – that is the Latin word for sea, *measure*, *matter*, *matrix* and *mind* are some of the words appeared from **ma*.

The Indo European **ma* indicated a creative moment, of discovery, which we become used to call *insight*. It was mutated into the Sanskrit *man* and in the Latin *men*, keeping in itself a formidable interrogation: is the *mind* a question of *measure*? What is the distance between *mind* and *matter*? Wouldn't be the human flash exactly that creative moment?

Another Indo European term, **tra* passed directly to Sanskrit. From its meanings of use and metamorphosis, *passage from one to the other side of the river*, when everything is mutation, several words appeared, like *tradition*, *transformation*, *transport*, *treason* and *tráppola*: trap, trick. Showing us how tradition is produced by change, by rupture.

Trick, trap, mind, *insight*, discovery, measure. We have here an amazing set of ideas that helps us to penetrate a little more in the meaning of the word *mantra*.

Like a sonorous oxymoron of *yantra* – this later essentially visual, made with forms and colours – *mantra* is basically sound: a repetitive formula that turns possible a reunion of the *Man*, the human being, *mind*, *measure*, to the continuous tissue of the knowledge that is Nature, as the *Mahabharata* tells us.

Those are some of Omar Galliani's central questions. Reality as *maya* dived inside the crowd of everything. Where everything is simultaneously repetition and difference. As if we could touch, subtly, the webs of time, of life, imagining an ephemeral net linking everything and all.

Abstract delirium on the maximum concreteness: when the frontiers between what is and what is not are no longer perceptible. Madness in diving inside an idea, a project, a particular and general, public and private universe.

A delirium that is we all.

But! Surprising – and it is only the rupture that can show us the continuous – a strike!

A strike of cars, trucks, transportation of merchandises: in the frontiers of Spain and France, hundreds, thousands of paralysed trucks.

Omar already was in Lisbon.

No information.

Everything nothing.

Little is known, everything is known from television.

Everything superficial.

It is known that there is a strike, but even the most basic arguments about it are not known.

Everyone has mobile telephones, but nobody knows exactly where the artworks are.

In the hyper-communication web there is simply no communication.

When Lucrezia De Domizio, Durini Baroness, named the exposition *The Turning Point*, the title was like a stream, without waiting, without any containment.

It was immediate. «We are all at a moment of metamorphosis», she would explain later.

But that choice would unveils itself as a magical premeditation.

Everything was paralysed inside the trucks, when the artwork, the thought, the poetry, became lost merchandise, among other ones.

When no thought would value any special attention. All dedifferentiated in a whole made of human beings, sweats, shouts, swearwords, hunger, revolts, moneys, powers, putrid powers.

To Omar Galliani his artwork is not only in the gigantic canvases – it is a little everywhere, in the *mantra* that is that continuous tissue of life. In the *mind* that also is the canvas.

He ran Lisbon. He was lost in the magical Bairro Alto's streets. He entered in the Coffees, the old book stores, the houses, the lights, colours – people made of an old time, a time lost inside a so glorious as mysterious past. A time initially made of sails and free seas, soon later submitted to the horror tortures – morbid, dreadful deletion, of the Saint Inquisition.

He collected the most diverse materials and decided to make an artwork dedicated to the city of Lisbon.

He just arrived from Peking, Venice, Paris – he had never elaborated any artwork out of his magnificent atelier built in the middle of trees and flowers of Parma, breathing the air of Reggio Emilia, of Bologna.

Daily life is the essence of Omar Galliani's artwork. The images of bodies, beautiful women, are fragments of magazines, television, people who pass through life many times without knowing it, species of zombies, moments dived in the continuous daily unconscious crowd. A little like we all. A time without time.

But, to him, the writing – beyond that what is written, subverting the Western literary tradition – emerges as a kind of hierogram, of visual element that transcends it. Galliani penetrated in the deepest East to elaborate a new writing, a new drawing.

Fragments of world that permanently turn around itself, of a numbness only broken by subtle ruptures of symmetry.

The artworks, during days, lost in the French mountains, give us much information about his work – traces of chance, like a Jackson Pollock *transcreation*, showing images that are not photographic, going beyond: images-fragment, fractal steps of the voluminous quotidian.

Where will it be the boundary between the abstract and the figurative?

In his works for Lisbon, *Turning Point*, that minute, fractal detailing, almost watchmaker, atomised, evidencing another *mantra's* dimension, is practically lost.

In its place, the thought structure of the artwork as a whole emerges: when the artist discloses his *mind* in the *measure* of the things. A true *mare* – sea – of things, *mantra*.

It is his thought structure that surprises us at all moment, linking this to that instant, disclosing the transparency of the continuous mantra of the quotidian, as if he would make it to reborn. That what we call *zombie* – our blind, deaf and dumb passage through the world – rebirths as the first, primordial moment of all our lives.

To understand Galliani's, works exhibited at the Palace Foz, it is necessary to *know* – because it is not about entertainment, about pure *ludus*. It is, before of all, reflection and illumination.

The unexpected and the continuous.

A mystical experience.

All of this reminds me an old Indian history.

In Benares lived a hunter who, in the attempt to capture an antelope, shot with his poisonous arrows – in error – a wonderful tree. Immediately, the tree started to dry. Since a long time, inside of it, lived a bird that, sad with the tree's fate, was dying together with it. Indra – which in Sanskrit means *the ruler* and that was, during a long period, the most important god of the Vedic pantheon – was absolutely astonished with the devotion of the bird. «How a simple bird can have so noble feelings?!», reflected the god. Assuming the figure of an old and wise Brahman, Indra was come close to the tree and asked the bird why it did not abandon that tree, almost completely dried, already without fruits, condemned. «But! It was here I was born, here I learned everything I know, this tree protected me from the enemies, from the storms, from the cold winds...», answered the bird, «Why do you want me to abandon such sense of love? This tree protected me!... how could I abandon it?».

Indra was so impressed with the nobility of the bird that, from the skies, he made to fall a brief rain with life drops and, because of the love of the bird, the tree came back to live.