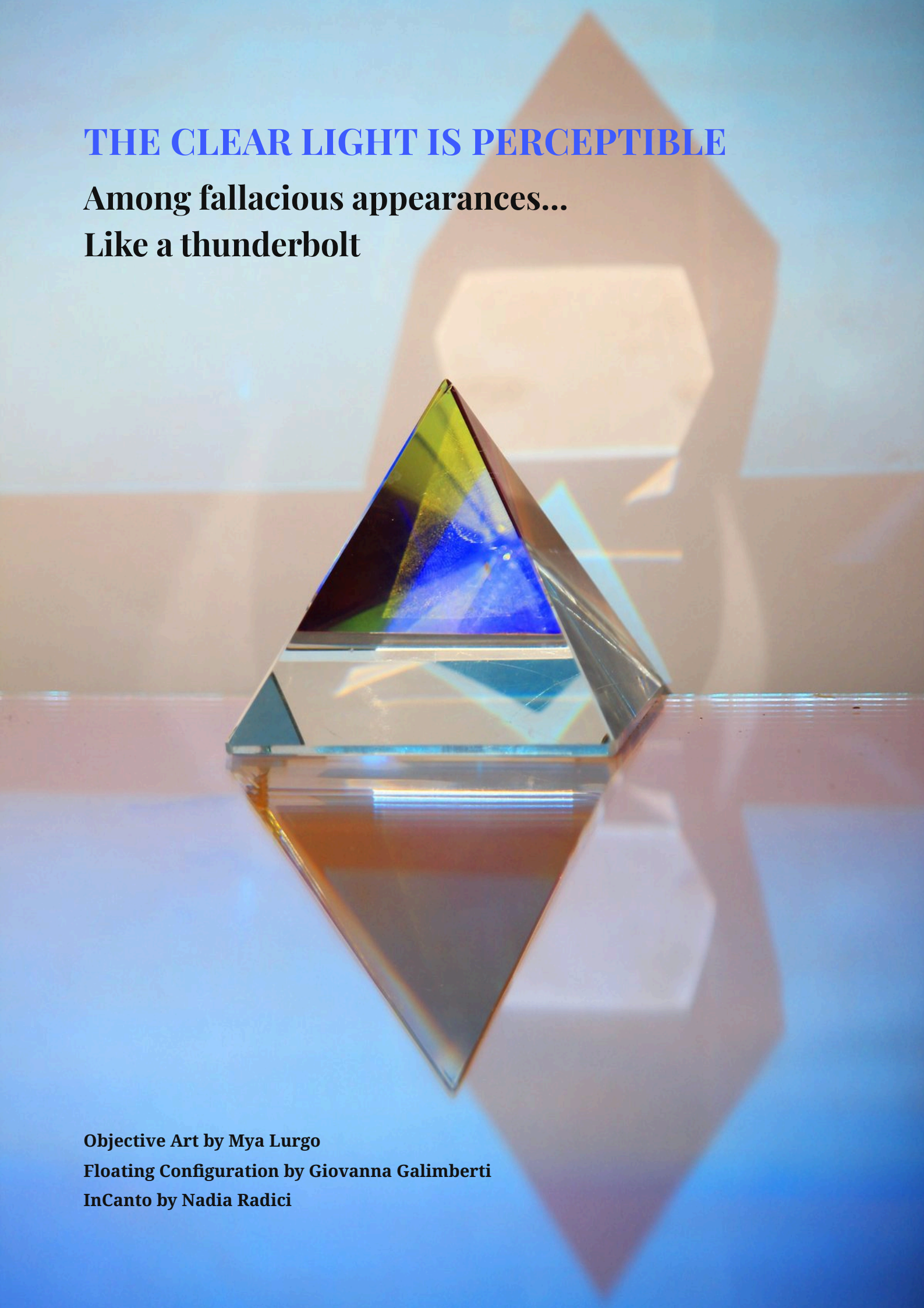
THE CLEAR LIGHT IS PERCEPTIBLE

Among fallacious appearances...
Like a thunderbolt



Objective Art by Mya Lurgo
Floating Configuration by Giovanna Galimberti
InCanto by Nadia Radici



Mya Lurgo, *we see what we want... at want*, 2020, installation, cardboard and mirror film

The Clear Light Is Perceptible

Among fallacious appearances… Like a thunderbolt

OBJECTIVE ART	Mya Lurgo
FLOATING CONFIGURATION	Giovanna Galimberti
INCANTO	Nadia Radici

“Knowledge is always a surprise…”

Bruno Munari

Study materials on the performance *The Clear Light Is Perceptible. Among Fallacious Appearances… Like a Thunderbolt*, 14–15–16 February 2020, Centro culturale Museo Elisarion, Municipality of Minusio (Switzerland).
Cover image: photograph by Alessia Ballabio. English edition, revised 2026.

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The project at a glance

A painter, a eurythmist and a singer set out to test, before an audience, whether the emotion an artist deliberately places in a work can reach those who look at it.

PERFORMANCE	*The Clear Light Is Perceptible. Among Fallacious Appearances… Like a Thunderbolt*
ARTISTS	Mya Lurgo, Objective Art · Giovanna Galimberti, Floating Configuration (eurythmic movement) · Nadia Radici, InCanto (voice)
VENUE AND DATES	Centro culturale Museo Elisarion, Minusio (Switzerland), 14–15–16 February 2020
THE WORK	Mya Lurgo, *Living Fulcrum*, 2020, mixed-media painting and LED, ø 300 cm, painted on site in the four days before the performances
DECLARED INTENT	Calm: the emotion the artist experienced most while painting, and the one the audience “should, objectively, receive”
METHOD	A guided exercise of seven breathing cycles in front of the work, followed by a question asked three times and an anonymous questionnaire listing twenty-seven emotions
OUTCOME	Calm was the emotion most often indicated, ticked 55 times in 77 questionnaires
WITH	Alessia Ballabio, installation and art-historical essay · Sara Osenda, lighting · Roberto Mantovani and Anna Di Natale, readings of the energy field

33
hours of painting

7
performances

77
questionnaires

55
ticks for calm

PART I

I

The Project

Three artists and one aim: to lead an audience, if only for an instant, to a perception free of interpretation.

OBJECTIVE ART BY MYA LURGO · FLOATING CONFIGURATION BY GIOVANNA GALIMBERTI · INCANTO BY NADIA RADICI

Introduction

— Mya Lurgo

The project grew out of the encounter between **Giovanna Galimberti**'s art of movement and **Mya Lurgo**'s acentric impulse. Both artists were drawn to the possibility of developing a modus operandi capable of leading the audience to a neutral, objective perception: one released from the grid of the past, from optical delirium and from the yoke of attraction, repulsion and indifference.

During the performance, the purity of **Nadia Radici**'s voice infuses enchantment and empathy with the dance and with the artistic operation, engaging not only the ear but the whole, vibrant, bodily sense of feeling. The spectator is in fact brought into resonance, like a tuning fork, through the intonation of specific vowels, vocalisations and modulations of the voice attuned to the harmonic flow of the movement.

The performance *The Clear Light Is Perceptible. Among Fallacious Appearances… Like a Thunderbolt* is a synergic operAction, consciously conceived by the three performers. This artistic trilogy sets out to open a breach in time among the fallacious appearances, that is, among subjective interpretations, so that uncorrupted perception may come about, if only for a few instants or, more poetically, **like a thunderbolt**.

In that span of time, consciousness is alert: **the clear light is**.
How long will such clarity last?

> Eckhart Tolle describes such an instant as a *satori*: a few seconds of complete presence before the mind returns, without which beauty could not have been perceived at all. The interval is so brief, he observes, that perceiving and then naming seem a single process; yet once thought reappears, what remains is only a memory of the perception.
>
> After Eckhart Tolle

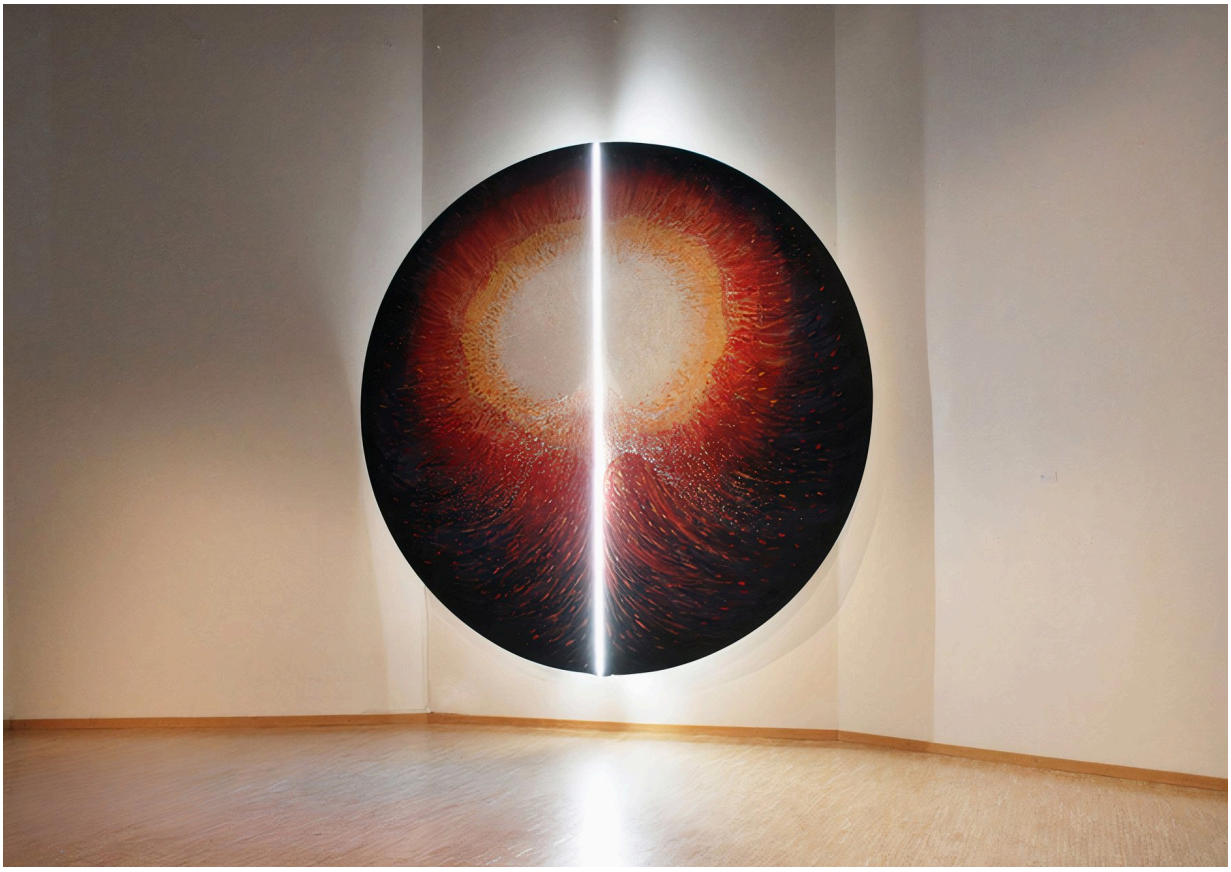
“For a clear light to be established, an active consciousness is needed: a witness, a silent watchman… In the absence of an awakened presence (who is observing the brain as it thinks?) human nature anticipates the past: it interprets what it sees according to the archive of experiences lived and catalogued in memory. This habit prevents us from understanding the thing in itself, because what is registered is in fact a revival.”

Contemporary art exalts the viewer’s licence to understand whatever he or she pleases in looking at art. There is certainly nothing wrong with free interpretation, yet the perceptual approach ought to lead to a neutral experience rather than to a mechanical replica of the observer’s own microcosm.

The question is not looking as such, the eye and its connections, but rather the interruption of the interpretation of seeing: the pre-conception, the pre-judgement, the conditioned reflex.

How many years will it take before an individual can be so present to themselves as to observe events, people, flowers, works… in their entirety, essence, reality and truth, without misleading interpretations? As many years as are needed to form the organ: a conscious imaginative awareness. And it is precisely because this apparatus has not yet been perfected that Objective Art is difficult to make and to understand.

Limpid perception is a seed in the making.



Mya Lurgo, *Living Fulcrum*, 2020, mixed-media painting, LED, ø 300 cm

PART II

II

The Work

Living Fulcrum: thirty-three hours of painting sustained by a single intent, after Gurdjieff's idea of Objective Art.

Objective Art and the Armenian Master Gurdjieff

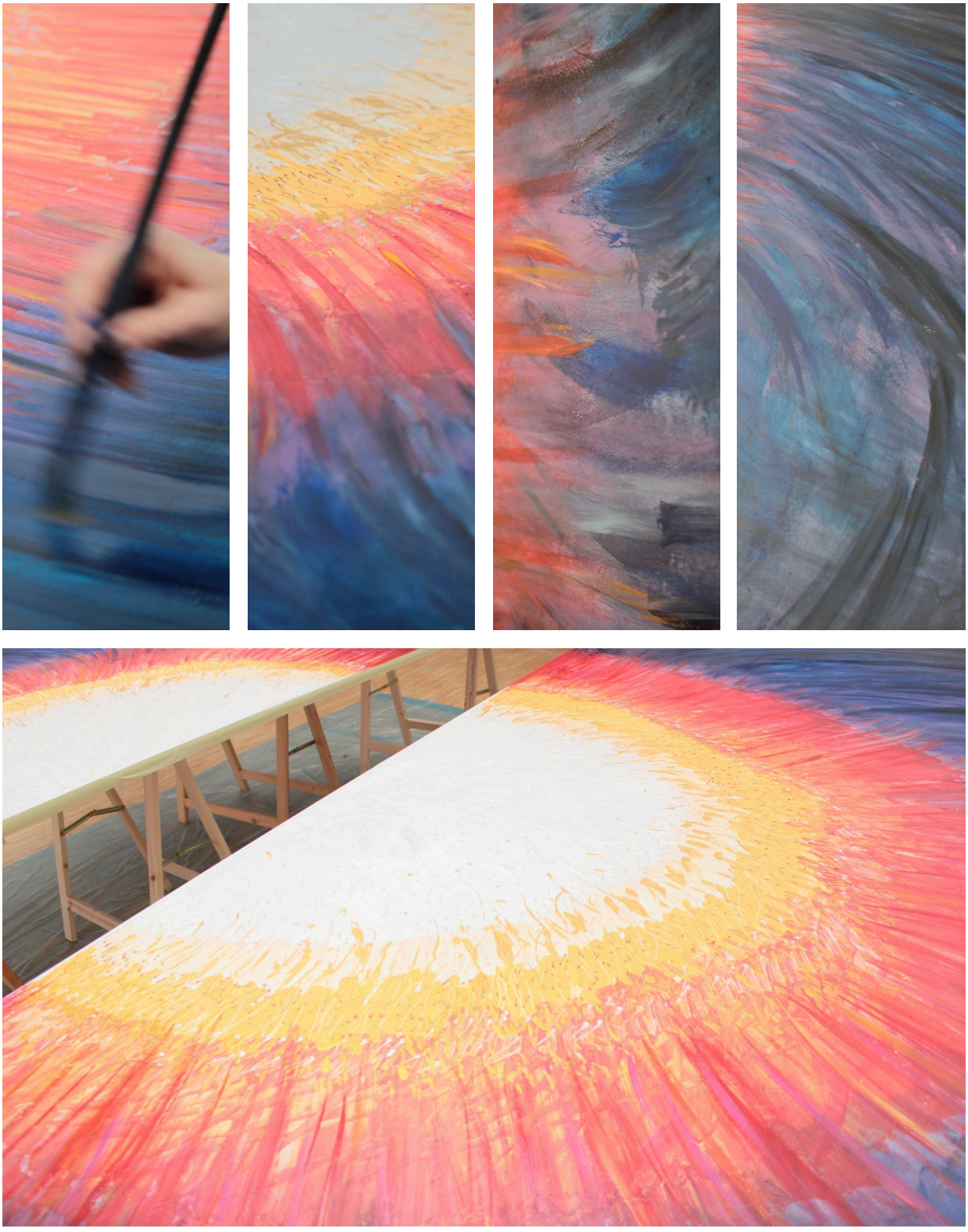
— Mya Lurgo

Living Fulcrum was painted in the four days preceding the performances of 14, 15 and 16 February 2020 at the Centro culturale Museo Elisarion. The creative intent that **Mya Lurgo** placed in the work is described here:

"I wish to enter the Living Fulcrum*, the creative process of existence, the point or vortex where idea becomes form, where the cell becomes a heartbeat, where the probability wave collapses into a particle, where life is always and only life, without opposites."*

Thirty-three hours of painting, focused on this artistic will, were needed in order to make Objective Art according to parameters inspired by the Armenian master George Ivanovich Gurdjieff. His view of art is recorded by his pupil P. D. Ouspensky in *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*.

> In Ouspensky's account, Gurdjieff refuses to call "art" what ordinarily goes by that name: it is subjective art, in which everything is accidental and the artist is carried by ideas and moods he neither understands nor governs. Objective Art is the reverse. The artist creates deliberately, puts into the work exactly what he intends, and the work acts on people with precision: each receives, at his or her own level, what the artist meant to transmit. When a pupil objects that such precision would turn art into a book, Gurdjieff accepts the comparison: an objective work is a book, written not in words or signs but in feelings aroused consciously and in full knowledge of their purpose.
>
> After P. D. Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous*



Mya Lurgo, *Living Fulcrum*, work in progress

PART III

III

The Experiment

Seven performances, seventy-seven questionnaires, one question: does the emotion placed in a work reach those who look at it?

Technique for Objective, or Hyperlucid, Vision — *Mya Lurgo*

Results of the Experiment after Seven Performances

Methodological Note (2026 revision)

Further Observations from the Audience

An Experiment within the Experiment: Complementary Vision — *Mya Lurgo*

Technique for Objective, or Hyperlucid, Vision

— Mya Lurgo

Before the performance, in the exhibition space, the audience was introduced to the theme of mistaken perception through a video and site-specific works conceived to unsettle the conviction that the senses are the ideal instruments with which to com-prehend reality, that is, to carry it with us.

The reading of the passage from Ouspensky made the aim of the experiment explicit: to lead the audience to experience an emotion shared as widely as possible, thanks to the creative intent sustained throughout the thirty-three hours of painting and to the crystallisation, in the painterly gesture, of a precise and stable emotional state of the artist, taken as a permanent centre of gravity:

> *"At first I felt a strong vertigo, an astonishment, an exaltation I could call joy; then I remained wholly enveloped in a deep sense of inner peace and relief. But if I must name one emotion among those listed in the questionnaire and recognised by contemporary psychology, calm is what I experienced most during the hours of painting. Calm is therefore the emotion that the audience of* Living Fulcrum *should, objectively, receive when observing the work."*

The audience was accompanied into the main hall of the Elisarion, where the painted and luminous work *Living Fulcrum* had been made, and took their seats; on each chair lay a questionnaire to be used later.

The installation was switched on and the audience had only a few minutes to look at it. Those present were then guided through a specific exercise for the objective, or hyperlucid, vision of the work, before they had the chance to interpret freely what they were seeing.

The exercise

The exercise lasts only a few minutes and is far from a traditional meditation. It is a means of bypassing, like a thunderbolt, the fallacious appearances that cloud the objectivity of perception, inducing the clear light in most of the audience.

> *Seated, with the back straight and the feet firmly on the floor, one hand on the belly and the other on the heart. With eyes open, breathe in deeply, absorbing the image of the work into yourself. Then breathe out gently with eyes closed, imagining that you are touching the work with your hands and recalling its inner presence through visual memory, eyelids lowered.*

The breathing, circular and rhythmic, was performed by the audience for seven cycles of inhalation and exhalation. This vigour was needed to get around, like a thunderbolt, the personal comfort zone: the limiting circumference of our pre-constituted knowing, feeling and seeing.

It was interesting to note how instinctively people expected to flow restfully into the work, rather than this energetic, forced contemplative activity.

At the end of the exercise a question was put to the audience three times. They were asked to answer by questionnaire and, if they wished, to add personal observations. The opportunity was a valuable one, since it is by no means easy to recognise and "tick" one's own feeling within the repertoire of primary and secondary emotions that psychology summarises as: fear, anger, sadness, joy/happiness, disgust/contempt, surprise, admiration, adoration, aesthetic appreciation, amusement, anxiety, awe, embarrassment, boredom, calm, confusion, craving, empathic pain, ecstasy, excitement, horror, interest, nostalgia, relief, romantic love, satisfaction and sexual desire.

Not least, the words themselves, the choice of terms with which to label an emotional state, are an obstacle and a limit to the experiment, since, as Wittgenstein teaches, the subjective boundaries of language set the limits of the world.

The question to the audience

"How do you feel in the heart of life, in the eternal pulsing of becoming, in the Living Fulcrum*, where everything is in-formed? What do you feel?"*

Once the audience had been given the time needed to answer in writing, Mya Lurgo, for transparency of intent, declared the creative will she had set in advance (to enter the *Living Fulcrum*, "where life is always and only life, without opposites") and reconfirmed the emotional state she had experienced during the thirty-three hours of painting: calm.

All the audience's answers to the questionnaire were then read aloud, so as to give a first indication of the result, performance after performance.

The audience was invited to leave an e-mail address in order to receive a final report on the experience of all seven experiments.

Results of the Experiment after Seven Performances

Across the seven performances, calm emerged as the most frequently selected emotion. The free comments also repeatedly evoked closely related states (peace, serenity, tranquillity, relaxation and inner peace), indicating a marked convergence around the same affective field. The result is therefore read as perceptual convergence, not as absolute identity between individual experiences.

> The action of an objective work on people is exact: each receives, at his or her own level, the ideas and feelings the artist meant to transmit.
>
> After G. I. Gurdjieff, as recorded by P. D. Ouspensky



Giovanna Galimberti, *Floating Configuration* (*Configurazione fluttuante*), 2020, video still

The questionnaire

Objective Art experiment by Mya Lurgo

Please tick the primary emotion you experienced AFTER the exercise for OBJECTIVE VISION carried out with Mya. If you wish, you may also write your personal observations, in complete anonymity. The questionnaires will be kept in the artist's archive.

- ☐ FEAR
- ☐ ANGER
- ☐ SADNESS
- ☐ JOY / HAPPINESS
- ☐ DISGUST / CONTEMPT
- ☐ SURPRISE
- ☐ ADMIRATION
- ☐ ADORATION
- ☐ AESTHETIC APPRECIATION
- ☐ AMUSEMENT
- ☐ ANXIETY
- ☐ AWE
- ☐ EMBARRASSMENT
- ☐ BOREDOM
- ☐ CALM
- ☐ CONFUSION
- ☐ CRAVING
- ☐ EMPATHIC PAIN
- ☐ ECSTASY
- ☐ EXCITEMENT
- ☐ HORROR
- ☐ INTEREST
- ☐ NOSTALGIA
- ☐ RELIEF
- ☐ ROMANTIC LOVE
- ☐ SATISFACTION
- ☐ SEXUAL DESIRE

Observations:

Results of the 77 questionnaires

Number of times each emotion was ticked across the seven performances (263 ticks in all).



2026 REVISION

Methodological Note

Language as the main limit of the experiment

The principal limitation of the experiment concerns language. Translating a perceptual and emotional experience into a single word necessarily reduces its complexity. Across the 77 questionnaires, calm was the most frequently selected emotion, with 55 ticks. Because several questionnaires contained more than one selection, the 77 forms produced 263 ticks in total.

The free comments also show that semantically related experiences were expressed through words such as peace, serenity, tranquillity, relaxation and inner peace. The numerical result therefore needs to be read together with the written testimonies: not as absolute identity between experiences, but as a significant perceptual convergence around the same affective field.

This methodological note does not alter the signed contributions by the other authors, which remain autonomous testimonies within the project.

Conditions for objective, or hyperlucid, vision

The experiment indicates that objective, or hyperlucid, vision can be made practicable, at least temporarily, when precise conditions are prepared. It was not a matter of simply placing a painting before an audience, but of constructing a perceptual device.

Upstream lay the artist's own work. The thirty-three hours required to make *Living Fulcrum* were sustained by intentionally maintaining a single conceptual nucleus, the work's creative intent, together with a related emotional state. This continuity of attention was made possible by a sustained practice of presence, concentration and observation of mental processes developed over the preceding years, including focused work with Giovanna Galimberti and eurythmic exercises. These practices already contained elements that the later research would formalise more explicitly as Integral Alignment and metacognition.

For the viewer, the Technique for Objective, or Hyperlucid, Vision used seven circular and rhythmic breathing cycles, alternating open and closed eyes, in an attempt to interrupt, for a limited interval, like a thunderbolt, the automatic chain of associations, memories, preconceptions and interpretations. The aim was to create a brief threshold of presence in which seeing could precede recognising and naming: a state in which the present image was not immediately replaced by the "eyes of one's own past".

The performative context also contributed to this preparation. Nadia Radici's *InCanto* engaged the bodily field of listening through voice and sound, while Giovanna Galimberti's *Floating Configuration*, through eurythmic gesture, helped configure and contain the perceptual space. Painting, light, breath, movement and voice thus acted as components of a single device.

Objective vision therefore emerges here not as an ordinary or guaranteed state, but as a possibility that must be prepared, practised and sustained. Across the seven experiments, a significant convergence emerged between the emotional state maintained by the artist during creation and the affective field expressed by the audience.

Further Observations from the Audience

— *“I’m happy to be here!”*

— *“Evolution.”*

— *“Tranquillity.”*

— *“Pulsating expectancy. Floating.”*

— *“Serenity / birth / awakening.”*

— *“Recognition, transformation, clarity.”*

— *“At first overwhelmed, a clash, a little lost. Then a surge of life, a quickened heartbeat, eyes of life, a state of bliss, total love.”*

— *“Indifference, absence, tranquillity of mind, no thought. Not influenced by my presence.”*

— *“The light dazzled the emotions.”*

— *“Explosion, birth, freedom, make room for me, I am here. And all the fragments of my love for the world. Enough now, everything is light.”*

— *“A pleasant, fluid sensation of entering the light, like a river at the bottom of a valley.”*

— *“Relaxed and calm.”*

— *“None of the words listed here describes exactly what I felt: at first vortex and bewilderment, then, more and more, envelopment, fusion, care, and so calm, surrender.”*

— *“Regality. A sense of the divine.”*

— *“Detachment. Distance.”*

— *“An immense peace! I never want to leave!”*

— *“It was beautiful!!! Nothing else; I felt so many emotions inside me.”*

— *“Coming into contact with everyone, moving ‘towards something’ all together. Beauty.”*

— *“A state of suspension, mental emptiness, inner calm and light spreading from within.”*

— *“The breathing in and out seemed too fast to me. I would rather try with single colours first and then with the whole painting.”*

— *“I did not like the performance; it seemed a parody of something else. Too many words, too much mind, too much control. The dance, the video, all the words spoken were out of place. The work of art was enough.”*

— *“Vitality at the centre, in every cell of the body, which can be felt and which coincides with the creative power of the cosmos.”*

— *“I felt enormous admiration for the lady who danced; I saw something magical in her. Then, while breathing out, I felt calm, and throughout the exercise I felt very interested.”*

— *“I cannot visualise any emotion, although I find the pairing of the painting with dance and song interesting.”*

— *“At times I was frightened and anguished about entering the flow of the work; at other moments I experienced calm and a total pleasure in being there. Like a swing.”*

— *“Peace, vitality, harmony.”*

— *“Warmth, protection, wonder.”*

— *“Womb, protection, relaxation.”*

— *“Breathing deeply, I saw more details of the work.”*

— *“Colours and movement are in tune, closely bound and united.”*

— *“Personally, I was not able to enter the guided meditation.”*

— *“I felt something that the words I ticked explain only in part. It was something, an emotion (?), that started from the chest.”*

— *“With my eyes closed I felt myself flowing. When I opened them the painting (its central part) came towards me like a volcanic emotion. Like a ball of fire approaching me.”*

— *“I had a specific sensation: in a way, of not making out the edges of the painting and of being unable to distinguish or define the relationship between painting and observer. Subject and object.”*

— *“A quiet sense of existing. A whispering beat, a swaying breath, a light pulsation, light.”*

— *“Blue gives me peace. Red gives me energy, orange gives me change and white gives me light. As our world turns on entering the white (meditation), so do our thoughts. And our thoughts can change, and the world will be ever more positive.”*

— *“I felt a sense of peace and tranquillity. Lovely sensations. The visual effect of the colours is very beautiful. Dance, art and music, sensations of calm and peace. As if entering another*

dimension; for me all of this conveys calm and inner peace. All pleasant sensations."

— *"Too fast."*

— *"Relaxation, too."*

— *"Everything was wonderful, the choreography too."*

— *"Contrasting but profound sensations emerge."*

— *"I find inner peace (I am here), balance, serenity."*

— *"Attraction upwards, towards the sky. A thrust upwards."*

— *"The light dividing the drawing in two dazzled me too much..."*

— *"I felt something like a heart expanding, an explosion of colours and movement."*

— *"For me it was a difficult experience, even though I felt a great calm. Thank you."*

— *"Sweetness and pain. A dissolving of boundaries and 'losing oneself' in the depths. Something ancient and ancestral. Nadia's voice → ancient."*

— *"I felt a connection with the higher self, that we are all one; I felt protection, I feel welcomed."*

— *"For my perceptive capacity the experience was very fast. I would have preferred more time for breathing, a longer breath, more time to immerse myself in colour and form."*

An Experiment within the Experiment: Complementary Vision

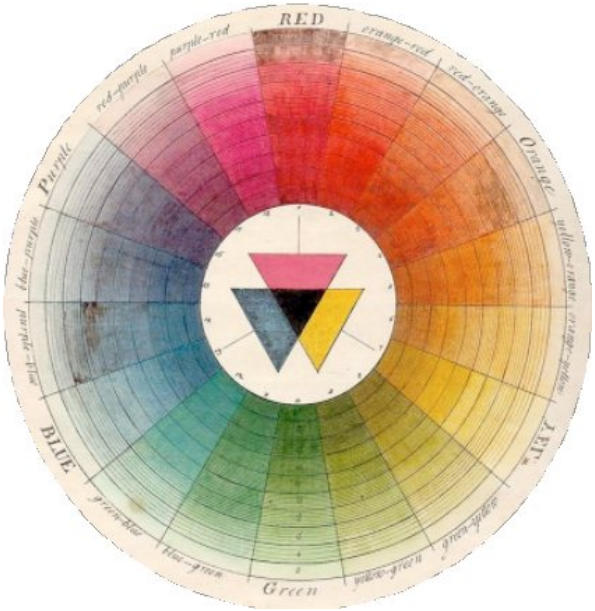
— Mya Lurgo

Human colour perception is such that monochromatic radiations, or “hues”, the components of every colour we perceive, are organised by the eye–brain system into pairs of opposite hues.

This is due to a purely physiological fact known as the afterimage: opposite colours elicit opposite responses from certain receptors in the eye and, when the retina is over-stimulated by a particular hue (as when one stares at *Living Fulcrum* with a small black dot at its centre), the brain makes us perceive the opposite colour in order to restore perceptual balance… A balance which, as we have seen, is rather fragile and subject to **optical illusions**.

Complementary colours are pairs of colours that lie on opposite sides of the colour wheel, a tool used to show the relationships between primary, secondary and tertiary colours.

The aura is not an optical effect produced by complementary colours: it corresponds to electromagnetic radiation and can be perceived, thanks to the pineal centre, by means of psychic vision.



Colour wheel: complementary colours lie opposite one another



Mya Lurgo, *Living Fulcrum*, with a black dot at the centre for the afterimage exercise

PART IV

IV

The Performance

Movement and voice under the dome of the Elisarion, in the words of Giovanna Galimberti and Nadia Radici.

Configuring the Clear Light, Floating — *Giovanna Galimberti*

My Artistic Path — *Nadia Radici*



Centro culturale e Museo Elisarion, Minusio

Configuring the Clear Light, Floating

— Giovanna Galimberti

Darkness in the hall. Before the spectators, little by little, *Living Fulcrum* lights up. In floating configuration a winged movement begins; the song emerges. The movements take shape, now radiant, now shadowed; they condense, release, envelop, transform, emanate colours. A dark red figure floats in the deep blue of a light mantle…

My encounter with **Mya Lurgo** goes back several years. It took about three years of preparation, practice, inner work and study to bring the performance *The Clear Light Is Perceptible* to life. It is highly significant that our longing for an art made of many perceptual layers found its first concrete home under the round dome of the Elisarion in Minusio, not far from Monte Verità: a building conceived as the *Sanctuarium Artis*, as its founder Elisàr von Kupffer called it in the early 1900s.

On 15 October 2011 I had given a “performance in movement” there to mark a double anniversary of the Elisarion: the inauguration of the Centro culturale e Museo Elisarion in 1981 and the birth in Weimar, in 1911, of Clarism, the movement founded by von Kupffer.

The architecture of the place, with its golden proportions, sustains the arts, be they movement, music, poetry, painting, eurythmy, sculpture or dance. In this setting, “impregnating” the space with the contents of the eurythmic gesture was a singular experience for me.

My movements gained lightness and depth quickly and without effort. Day after day I practised the intention underlying the performance: the colours in a dance, a welling red in dialogue with a deep blue at the periphery, held in relation by a peach-blossom pink in the region of the heart.

I saw them grow, impregnate, characterise and express themselves in my movement with naturalness and harmony. And the next day I would find them still present, almost palpable in the hall, as if they were waiting for me. In the six days before the event I had my own sequence: entering the space with the consciousness of the star tetrahedron; inviting to each vertex different “collaborators” with their own movements: blue, yellow, time, red, white and black. Then inviting the winged movement in the colours of the poem: red, blue, peach-blossom pink. A deep, wide blue, a night blue, that blue which is night, mother of all, enveloping from afar the whole space of the hall and beyond.

I continued with the circles of the forces that shape language: the circle of vowels and planets, the circle of consonants and zodiacal movements. Finally, in floating configuration, I made manifest the poem *Rose of Light*, written for this event.

> *Queen of Light,*
> *crown of red roses,*
> *girded with a blue mantle,*
> *flowing, powerful, limpid*
> *as the sea.*
>
> *A rose-pink chalice,*
> *transparent and sincere,*
> *takes form in the heart and*
> *holds the spaces.*
>
> *Solemn creation,*
> *consciously listening,*
> *hovers perennially,*
> *attentively tending.*
>
> *Child love*
> *in the heart of each*
> *sustains within the breast*
>
> Giovanna Galimberti, *Rose of Light* (*Rosa di luce*)

I have always been fascinated by perceiving the atmosphere of temples, amphitheatres, places of worship and places of war, healthy trees and sick trees, and by finding instruments of my own that might foster and sustain balance and health in the atmospheres of houses and of disturbed places…

I have deepened the art of movement by placing the living at the centre of every gesture, exploring the word as a complexity of currents, exploring music as an expression of inwardness in each of its motifs, notes and intervals. And I have been able to develop effective instruments for interacting with reality through gesture.

The human world is infinite, human inwardness is infinite, the divine is infinite, art is infinite; but when does a work of art have meaning? I believe art has meaning when it lets something of the “quid” that lies behind and beyond shine through and become manifest; when it becomes a small vessel in which to cross the sea and “see” with the eyes of the soul.

To see on different levels: inwardness, the divine, beauty, the sorrows and joys of the yearning soul. It yearns to feel itself, to be there in the “here and now”, present to itself before the infinite. Many similar longings and earlier experiences shaped the encounter between **Mya Lurgo** and me. What united us in this experience?

For Mya, too, art has the power to transform. We both believe that art can become a portal, that behind the making of art lies a world of forces, atmospheres and life. We both believe that intent directed towards an awareness of the forces active behind manifestations can make the difference, and can convey an experience beyond the pure enjoyment of the senses. We both believe that a wide vocabulary of inner experiences fosters, indeed makes possible, perceiving beyond. We both believe that continual, sincere inner growth is an integral part of every art. It was in this spirit that our experiment in “Objective Art” was born.

Nadia Radici, an artist with an en-chanted voice, admirably sustained the CLEAR LIGHT event with her creativity. With her empathic gift for “sensing” what is happening and how, she harmonised her song with all that was “becoming”.



Giovanna Galimberti, *Floating Configuration*, 2020, video still






Giovanna Galimberti, *Floating Configuration*, 2020, video stills

My Artistic Path

— Nadia Radici

Let me introduce myself briefly. In my life I am a singer, a beautician and a naturopath. I love studying and discovering the secrets of Mother Earth. My interests include geobiology, feng shui, hermetic philosophy and alchemy, and I have a passion for herbalism.

I began as a self-taught solo singer, but later decided to attend a music school and then the Accademia di Eufonia in Ascona (the study of the consciousness of sound). From a young age I lent my voice to dance bands; I then became a backing vocalist for several singers and finally, some years ago, chose to devote myself solely to my great passion: jazz!

Through these songs I discovered more and more how important it is for a jazz singer to draw on her own lived experience in order to give emotion, immersing herself completely in the essence of the song. This has a remarkable impact on the audience and, not least, on me!

To bring my passions into sharper focus, a few years ago I decided to leave my job as a secretary to attend the RIZA school of psychosomatic medicine in Milan and become a naturopath. **My wish was to unite these two worlds: psychophysical well-being and the beauty of song.** I understood at once that the balance of our health depends on the harmonious functioning of our cells and on the sound they constantly emit. Every organ, bone and tissue of the body has its own resonant frequency, and together they create a single, distinct vibrational rhythm.

In my thesis, *La compenetrazione del canto nella materia* (The Interpenetration of Song and Matter), I describe all my experiences with the voice through massage, crystals, waters and so on, in which intent can modify the molecular structure of the matter with which we interact.

When **Mya** and **Giovanna** asked me to collaborate on this project I was thrilled! In the week before the performance at the Centro culturale Museo Elisarion, while **Mya** was painting this gigantic canvas, one could sense that she was at one with the work; and when I sang and **Giovanna** danced I had the sensation that a new, cohesive entity was being born. I remember that, despite personal problems and fluctuating moods, nothing could withstand the beauty of co-creating together, and all doubts and uncertainties were shattered in that space… like a thunderbolt!

I fully understood the meaning of our work:
The clear light is perceptible.
Among fallacious appearances…
Like a thunderbolt

For me, beauty and song mean BEING VOICE!



Nadia Radici, *InCanto*, 2020

PART V

V

Behind the Scenes

The practice beneath the performance: intent, the reading of the energy field, the impregnation of space; and the studies and drawings that prepared it.

Reflections for Practitioners of Spiritual Work	*Mya Lurgo*
Readings of the Energy Field	*Roberto Mantovani, Anna Di Natale*
Reflections from Either Side of the Boundary	*Giovanna Galimberti*
Studies and drawings	*Mya Lurgo, Giovanna Galimberti*

Reflections for Practitioners of Spiritual Work

— Mya Lurgo

The "behind the scenes" of this experiment explored the following questions:

- How can we halt the automatism that brings in meanings alien to what is at work in the work?
- Can beauty exist only in the eye of the beholder, or can it have an objective life of its own?
- Can the artist's intent come through loud and clear from the warp and weft of the work?
- How can we evolve perception so as to recognise the forces at play?
- Does persistent information determine form?

> *"Objective Art evokes and encircles a content*
> *Immaterial art, or art of the Spirit, gives life*
> *The new human being can give life with their own fiat, made of intent and vitality*
> *The pure intent of Objective Art is the first phase*
> *Giving life, animating, will come"*
>
> *The Golden Book* XV

Three years of practice were needed to gather the first fruits of a new perception. Without this preliminary work of "forging" the performers' very being, it would not have been possible to determine the contents of the form. Objective Art therefore in-forms and creates through the concentration of the will; from this follows an emotional balance that can be transmitted from artist to audience through empathy, or osmosis, with the work.

The preliminary impregnation of the space and the guided breathing of the viewer are integral to the process of hyperlucid perception: one need only try holding one's breath for a few moments to understand how much one's inner presence changes. **Giovanna Galimberti**'s dance in fact summoned the qualities needed to saturate the stage space, the "lab-oratorium", sealing the atmosphere: the protective, receptive habitat suited to the new collective perception.

Her floating motion invites, co-moves and eurythmically configures colours, time, space and creative hierarchies in the completeness of the star tetrahedron, in order to facilitate and amplify the audience's sensory purity. In synergy, sound, the enchantment of all the arts, allowed **Nadia Radici**, vocalist, to cradle the spectators' senses so that they might relax, lay down the arms of interpretive reactivity, vibrate an octave higher than usual and allow themselves an intuitive change of perspective.

The *téchne* used to infuse creative intent into the warp and weft of the work belongs to the practice theorised by **Mya Lurgo** as the ART OF THE SPIRIT. It is founded on the Integral Alignment of one's physical and superphysical vehicles (mental, emotional and of the soul) and on the activation of the Archetype, understood as the daily construction of an energetic structure capable of ordering and embodying one's own system of thought. An integral part of this process is Meditative Writing, a practice through which the artist enters into communion and communication with the Self. These writings are collected in more than twenty-eight volumes entitled *The Golden Book*.

> *"The extra-ordinary expansion of consciousness*
> *has a time limit*
> *but it is possible*
> *All the sensory centres are involved*
> *Such vision is like a flash*
> *the mind may not understand it at once*
> *but the vital body will hold it in memory for a later experience"*
>
> *The Golden Book* XIV

In short: the constitution of a space fit for the new collective perception, the harmonic inCanto and the creative intent, focused and crystallised, formed a synergic trilogy to make visible the soul of the work: in the particular case of *Living Fulcrum*, **the Being of Form**.

There follow the reflections of two practitioners of sensitive and subtle work: Anna Di Natale and Roberto Mantovani, teachers of Aura Reading.

Readings of the Energy Field

during the Objective Art performance, 16 February 2020 — Roberto Mantovani and Anna Di Natale

▲ My name is **Roberto Mantovani**. I have practised Aura Reading professionally for many years; for ten years I have taught it in a training school, and I carry out independent research on remote viewing and remote viewing engineering. Together with my colleague Anna Di Natale, I was very glad to accept Mya Lurgo's invitation to take part in her Objective Art performance, with Giovanna Galimberti's Movement of Floating Configurations and Nadia Radici's voice, InCanto.

My contribution to the performance was therefore to read in depth: the environment of the hall of the Elisarion, which housed **Mya Lurgo**'s Work of Objective Art; **Giovanna Galimberti**'s Movement; **Nadia Radici**'s Song; the group of participants. Not as single entities, but in their vital and dynamic interaction and relationship, in an intense and subtle dialogue. A series of explosions, of pulsations of colour and of geometries, cascading into the vivid form of the floating geometries, the musical peaks, the beams of light so resplendent with chromatic rays, which filled the entire golden section of the hall of the Elisarion with a wave of life. A deep and immeasurable expression of life. A fragment of the universe or rather, to use Mya's words, "among fallacious appearances, like a thunderbolt". Thank you, Mya!

As a matter of ethical and professional correctness, before describing the Aura Reading I carried out before, during and after the performance, I must make two points clear.

1. Before beginning the reading I deliberately and consciously set a precise focus: to exclude any kind of emotion and feeling from perception, giving ample room to visual impressions, to images. I also deliberately excluded any kind of archetypal image of a mystical, religious or spiritual nature. All this so as not to influence the performance or alter the participants' auric field and, importantly, so as to obtain only simple, intense, pure images.

2. The mode of aura reading I applied is not an individual reading of each participant but a group experiment integrated into an artistic performance; it could therefore be of no use as a helping practice in individual consultation.

The description of the perceptual experience that follows therefore belongs to everyone and, above all, to no one. It belongs to the Nothing.

For simplicity I shall call Mya Lurgo's work of Objective Art the *Work*, Giovanna Galimberti's eurythmic movement the *Movement*, and Nadia Radici's voice the *Song*.

PERCEPTION BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

Between one heartbeat and the next: silence. Between the in-breath and the out-breath, a long pause of apnoea: silence. I induce it in myself: silence. Silence. Like descending very deep. Immersed. Under water. Very deep. In the Sea. In the Ocean. In the space of the hall of the Elisarion, suddenly, the image lights up. A wide vortex of energy, between platinum silver and white gold, turns anticlockwise in the upper part, near the vault of the dodecahedral ceiling, like a tide of light turning in a very dense, slow, intense vortex. Lower down, near the floor, another vortex of the same colour and speed, but in the opposite direction, turns clockwise. The two slow vortices merge, rotating in synchrony and together forming the image of a great toroid: a precise geometry, oscillating and moving, almost as wide as the perimeter of the hall. In shades between platinum and white gold.

PERCEPTION SHORTLY BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

Movement: synchronic waves, with long curves veering to the right and concave waves veering to the left, both an intense blue and violet. Then convex curves open, spiralling upwards, with points of light higher up, before descending swiftly in a golden serpentine. Waves with a golden matrix chase one another, wave-forms resembling mother-of-pearl shells, in concentric folds. In the hall I detect a small discontinuity in the otherwise more even energetic movement perceived across most of the space. A point of slight energetic discharge, tunnel-shaped, like a chimney, perpendicular to the floor. About thirty centimetres from the exact centre of the floor, towards the entrance, there is a geomagnetic anomaly, probably of hydrogeological origin: presumably an aquifer in the subsoil, directly below the discontinuity detected in the hall, beneath the foundations of the Elisarion.

PERCEPTION AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PERFORMANCE

A great auric energy field, like a single, dense, large bubble of luminous foam, for now expanding forwards, towards the *Work*, with a pulsating wave front about a metre and a half deep. Tremors on the wave front, like the surface tension of water barely ruffled by the breeze of a dragonfly flying, weightless and silent, just above the surface of a small lake.

The bubble of light grows brighter and opens into blues, an intense blue, together with wide patches of pale colour like water vapour, with areas of silvery-grey mist. Now, before the centre of the forehead of many of the participants, between a metre and a metre and a half from the face, silver waves. Above the head the wave front of the field grows in intensity and density. The bubble of the vibrating field rises to about two metres above the crown of the head.

Suddenly the line of light switches on from the depths of the *Work* and a luminous beam emerges, like a wave hidden among the currents, rebounding several times between the participants' foreheads and the *Work*, like an encrypted dialogue of light signals, sprung from the hidden night of a day of full Sun.

The image resembles sea waves that meet and then run parallel over the surface of a watery light, which moves while keeping within itself an imposing inertial force, the waves synchronising and amplifying one another. The centre of the forehead. The centre of the *Work*. Sentient light.

Movement: it unfolds outwards in a broad wave, gold and silver, which opens with a cleft at its centre and, like the breath of a bellows, takes the form of a mystic mandorla. In the movement of the arms, silvery lines soar and gain density, intersecting the intense beams, deep blue with peaks of intense red, emanating from the *Work*. When the lines, thus charged, meet the great bubble of the participants' field, which now appears as a floating spindle, dynamically dense, tangible, alive, three spheres detach themselves: upwards, to the right and to the left. The three spheres belong to no one. They are made of Nothing. And yet the spheres unfold out of the participants. They are the relationship, a dialogue of condensations, of colours. The spheres are now four, then five, about half a metre diagonally above the participants' foreheads. They are floating geometric images, some ten to twenty centimetres in diameter. The spheres pulse. They pulse almost in time with the heartbeat of some of the participants. A much slower pulsation. A much slower, almost hypnotic rhythm. But alive. Extremely alive. Like the beat of a drum, slowly spreading its waves through the hollow of a cave. An echo rebounding between the walls of the hall. Creating resonance.

Between the *Work*, the participants' auric field and the *Movement*, a vortex now opens, spiralling upwards, bright red. *Song*: waves of gold that roll back into a violet foam and then vanish into the blue. Into the deep, bottomless Blue. And into the blue they withdraw, to disappear, to dematerialise. Then again, out of Nothing, waves. Of gold. They hook onto the red vortex still spiralling towards the upper part of the hall. Strong is the beat. The heart. Revealed in an image as an impulse. Spherical. A wide sphere. It appears. It disappears. It appears. It disappears. A harmonising of gold, violet and blue waves, which become concentric. From the *Song*, strong tones of deep blue and red light up above the crown of the participants' heads. A further expansion of the bubble of luminous density before the forehead. Waves of great breadth, like blue wings unfurled in the evening air before taking flight towards the sphere of the sun. Like the song of a cloud when, in deafening Silence, it dives into the ocean of the sky. In the apparent movement of everything as it rests in motionless totality. And the spheres disappear once more. Like the waves. They too are reabsorbed. By the colours. Then, for an instant, by the absence of colours. And at last there is nothing more. No image. All is reabsorbed by the Nothing.

Again a torsion field rises from the floor, winding around itself in wide coils, upwards, near an intense crossing of geomagnetic lines, in front of and very close to the *Work*. A harmonising interaction, a fluctuation of polarised charges, moving in an upward vortex.

Likewise the coherent convergence of the waves arising from the experience reduces the zone of lowered energetic intensity above the geomagnetic anomaly, thirty centimetres from the centre of the hall, towards the entrance.

PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE END OF THE PERFORMANCE

Mya asks the participants a question. Emotional perturbation, with strong rippling before the solar plexus, roughly at the pit of the stomach. Concentric half-waves rotate from below upwards, diagonally and horizontally, in front of the heart, an intense crimson. Bright above all at the centre of the chest, with sea-blue filaments stretching and undulating over the neck. A moderate increase in the pulsation in the chest, with small wave fronts crossing the neck, slight contractions and expansions. Then blue prevails, with mother-of-pearl reflections between the shoulders, the occiput and the forehead. Concentration. Rational thought intervenes. A slight contraction of the group's auric field.

The right side of the energy field opens and expands by at least twenty or thirty centimetres, while the left side withdraws. Vortices above the head. Then the left side of the field expands again, as each listens inwardly to their own emotions. The bubble of the field now contracts before the forehead while the participants tick or write their answers on the sheet. Now the geomagnetic discontinuity near the row of cushions on the floor, about thirty centimetres from the centre of the hall, regains its intensity and returns to the state it was in before the performance.

Points of intense warm red, mahogany red, burnt sienna before the forehead, once the answers have been written.

PERCEPTION AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

Song, *Movement* and *Work*: waves of gold, white and red, point-like, rarefied. Elliptical, concentric vortices rotating around virtual points of red, blue and gold light. Vertical spirals winding around themselves, expanding and contracting on the waves of the song and of the movement, harmonising once more in the air. Behind everything, showing through, the deep blue. Then, after the expansion, the waves withdraw. Vanishing again into the void.

> *Leaving the vibrant memory in every oscillating particle.*
> *Hidden from sight. Concealed in the Nothing.*
> *Full of life.*

▲ My name is **Anna Di Natale**; I have worked with Aura Reading and subtle perception for a number of years. I am a colleague of Roberto Mantovani and took part in the performance with him, offering my own perceptual contribution. The technique we adopt in perceiving is the same, and the vision is objective, but the language that expresses its result may differ in catching certain nuances, which in the end complement one another.

In the hall where the *Work* was exhibited and the performance took place, a floating, translucent bubble formed, as large as the whole space, within the energetic structure of the place. I had this vision at once, before the group of people had come in. It stayed alive during the focusing I carried out at the beginning, in preparation for perceiving, to detach myself from any emotional expression and so not influence the experience. A silent, contained, implosive motion towards the centre. A plunge into the deep interior of silence, into the muffled dimension of the space.

Not exactly at the centre of the room but shifted towards the *Work*, a golden spherical luminescence emanates rays, also golden, which light up the space and merge with the light emanated by the colours of the *Work*. A union of luminous explosions that curve and join the painting, creating symbiosis.

PHASE 1

People enter the hall. The experience has not yet begun and the group's energy field appears uneven and irregular in places: more contracted towards the centre and on the left, with protrusions on the right and at the front, yet all in very dynamic movement, as if seeking a direction. The colours, too, are of different tones, arranged so that they are sharply separated. An energetic arrangement that looks fragmented, but tends to settle, thanks also to the containing effect of the energy bubble described above.

PHASE 2

The eurythmy movements designed by **Giovanna Galimberti** begin. The whole energy field of the group at first extends outwards, towards the centre. Then it settles. The dancer's movements trace volutes with violet outlines and gold and silver emanations in the air, which shade off towards the audience in clouds of the same colour. These in-form the people's auric field, colouring it. In some points of the overall field there is still some resistance to absorbing the colour, so that the field appears now more saturated, now more faded. The form, however, has already become more even and compact. After an initial phase, as the dance unfolds, the choreography becomes impregnated with the colours of the *Work*, which are carried with grace, in a wave-like movement, towards the audience, who begin to take on yellow, red and blue. All the colours dance together with the movements.

When the sounds of **Nadia Radici**'s voice begin, the group's auric field shows very high peaks, especially on the notes of blue. The whole field becomes like a graph registering the alternation of higher and lower emissions. With the sounds, golden rays begin to be reflected from the solar plexus and chest of those present. They are like luminous threads that gather towards the centre and rise towards the dome of the temple of colours, musicality and vibrations that has taken shape throughout the space.

At a certain moment all the colours unite in harmony and take on greater luminosity and brilliance.

PHASE 3

The breathing guided by **Mya Lurgo** begins. The red grows lighter, mingling with brushstrokes of golden yellow to create a new shade of orange that rises above the participants' heads and emits numerous rays of light. Then Mya asks the participants a question. Shortly afterwards a mantle of blue wraps all those present in a rising spiral. The blue of the *Work* reaches each person, connecting with the blue spheres that implode between the solar plexus and the heart. There is a sensation of sinking into the depth of the blue, as into infinite inwardness. Now the colours of the *Work* and of the group's Energy Field are the same; they harmonise, merging and vibrating with a brighter light.

PHASE 4

The participants are asked to fill in a questionnaire. While each is writing, the group's Auric Field is still fairly regular and compact, but it begins to thin out, because some people return to rational thought and formulate ideas connected with the meaning of life.

FINALE

The final perception is of a form opening upwards like a crown. The colours are vivid, and there is a sense of greater presence, accompanied by a sense of balance, relaxation and surrender, with moments of being deeply moved.

The dancer's final movements give the impression of water flowing freely, in the calm of minds and bodies.

Colour Movement Song
a single vibration
In the Calm all dissolves
Vanishing into the void
And then again the Deep Silence.

For more information on the work of Roberto Mantovani and Anna Di Natale:
www.letturadellaura.it · scuolaletturadellaura@gmail.com

Reflections from Either Side of the Boundary

— Giovanna Galimberti

It is far easier to teach, perform and practise the art of movement than to explain it. When it is enacted, the experience arises easily and objectively in anyone, and nourishes known places of our being as well as forgotten ones.

Is it possible to define the meaning of a floating configuration? I attempt a synthesis:

In the body, in inwardness, in space-time, dwelling in love in the seat of the heart and breast becomes the fulcrum and meaning of every movement; it builds consciousness between the parts, whether the movement has the character of light or of darkness.

The supreme Being that forms, creates and sustains the whole universe also sustains our body, forming and creating it at every instant! The creative current of the Word (verb, word, sound) is a vibration that penetrates matter and makes it living, a bearer of form but above all of living impregnations that form, act upon and sustain the matter-body. The matter-body is an illusion. The human physical body is a marvellous becoming of form and continuous processes. These processes can be investigated in a scientific, objective way.

Take the “mercurial” process involved in the formation and activity of the lungs and of breathing: a function of sustaining centredness in joyful becoming, it is always present at an intersection of etheric-vital and soul activities, of emotions, feelings and thought. Thanks to mercurial activity the body organises itself between inside and outside, above and below, right and left; it arranges itself along a vertical, and thanks to the vertical we experience ourselves as individuals. In constantly creating a balance, a presence between above and below, right and left, inside and outside, front and back, outer world and inner world, we develop and recognise our Self, our consciousness.

In the search for balance we learn to will the Self. The will is always free, and it learns to will the Self through active presence in the vertical and between opposites. The development of the vertical is understood here as standing among different elements, a consciousness of being there “between opposites”, in a continual search for one’s position; and it is always a free choice. Just as mercury always forms spherical aggregations and never crystallises, so we continually

create our balances: in the body, in health, in the psyche, in relationships. If we come to a halt in one of these spheres, our freedom of breath is diminished.

The Word is understood here as part of the current of sound, of the creative action of the "Verb"; it has the character of objectivity and is received and modulated in full consciousness by the subject, as a free instrument that senses and wills the creative forces inherent in the word.

In-formation and connection of a space, of a place. An example: the impregnation of the twelve-sided space of the Elisarion for the performance *The Clear Light Is Perceptible*.

PREMISES

With intensity and inner strength I "invited" and set in motion the different densities of the colours in the consciousness of the six-pointed star, and "listened" to them as they arose. I devoted a great deal of time to practising the colours. The technique of movement is in essence a "technique" of soul presence and intention, able to awaken and summon first the vital-etheric sphere and then the physical-spatial one, so that the different radiances of the colours become visible. The free, active pervading of one's own will is a quality of movement. Will: a force pervading the ether, the fine crest of the wave, the dragonfly flying at evening over the mist of the lake (see the texts by Roberto Mantovani and Anna Di Natale).

It is what comes before becoming form, what lies behind the fallacious appearance of the senses; it is the creating action, the "Gods" who operate, act and create the world we see and the world we feel.

In gesture, the will, filled with soul, connects with the forming, operating action that becomes and takes shape on the material plane. It connects by enacting the colours, by enacting and being the word (consonants, syllables, verbs, nouns, rhymes, rhythms, the weaving behind meaning), by being present. This, at least, is what I believe every artist of movement aspires to achieve. True art is something one longs for throughout life; one tries to develop ever more technique and humility before the beauty of the universe, and all one's life one is on a path of human and artistic growth!

THREE QUALITIES OF MOVEMENT

In the performance, colour was made manifest through the interplay of three different qualities of movement.

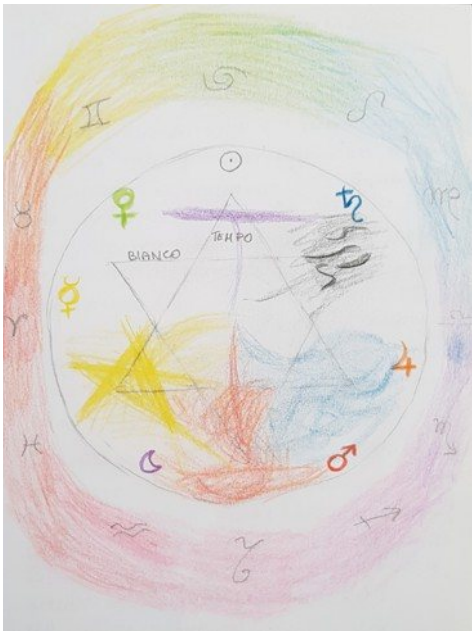
Movement-colour of the self. The colour emanates from oneself, from the kind of muscle tone. A particular colour radiates from my figure, like a specific

attitude. If, for example, I enter a room emanating yellow, that is, light and joyfulness, my muscle tone is very different from when I arrive emanating blue, that is, calm, envelopment, softness. Here it is red: a warm, intense red, the heart's enthusiastic response to the beauty of the world.

Movement-colour of the surroundings, of the periphery. One enacts the colour "around", a quality that comes to meet us. The world, for instance, comes to meet me blue and calms me, or comes to meet me red… The quality and density of my movement change. Here it is the infinite, wide, deep blue that envelops us, gives us the breath of eternity and is like the night, mother of all.

Movement-colour of character, of intention. In eurythmic terms the character colour is the third element, which "governs" the other two. A red attitude set within a blue periphery, for example, is held in balance by a few brushstrokes of peach-blossom pink: the consciousness of pink, the character of pink. Technically, the pink is made to appear by tuning to it a few small parts of the body or of the periphery. Here peach-blossom pink is the presence of childhood in inner space: a child of light, a seed in the heart to be cradled, tended and loved.

These are the colours of the poem *Rose of Light*, brought into movement during the performance. The "TRIAD" of presence is a leitmotif very dear to me, which guides my movement.



Giovanna Galimberti, the colours of the poem *Rose of Light*

SEQUENCE FOR IMPREGNATING THE SPACE AND FOR TRAINING

1 Consciousness of the six-pointed star tetrahedron; invitation to the colours as travelling companions: blue, yellow, red, white, black, and time.

2 Movement of the planetary forces in the circle, with their vowels and their colours, again in the circle.

3 Movement of the zodiacal forces and of their consonantal formative forces in the circle.

4 Preparation for the poem *Rose of Light*. Movement of the self: red. Movement of the surroundings: deep blue with touches of indigo (the maternal night). Movement of character: peach-blossom pink in the region of the chest. I activated these atmospheres in my inner being and in my physical-vital instrument.

5 Presence and movement of the "THREE WINGS": this too is easy to do and complex to explain. It means arousing an intimate connection between inner space, cosmic space and one's own movement, so as to "transform" the stage space, making it translucent, and to try, through one's own active listening and presence, to allow the true alchemy that can come about through the arts.

6 Inner and bodily training of the movements of the poem, with all the preceding background.

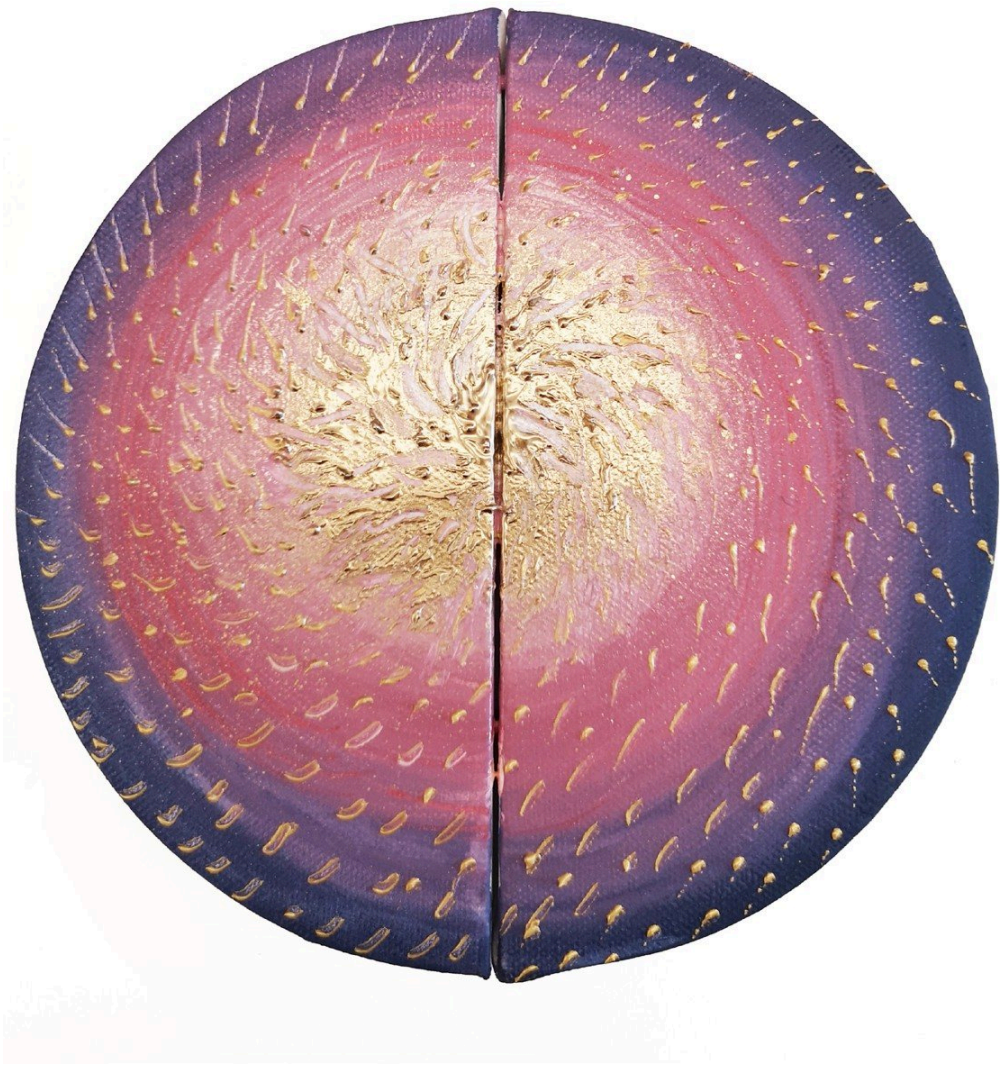
7 This "substance" built up little by little. With her song **Nadia Radici**, like a musical instrument, tuned and attuned herself to the event in all its complexity, completing it with her own "substance".

WHAT DID I LEARN FROM THE PERFORMANCES?

First of all, I became even more aware that a loving, humble and courageous attitude, with trust in oneself, in the other and in the universe, always bears fruit.

Secondly, the fact that three artists were directly involved, with an attitude of love for art and for beauty and a desire to try things together, made possible an atmosphere that nourished everyone. The collaborations around the event, indispensable to it (the installation by Alessia Ballabio, the lighting by Sara Osenda and the work of all the other precious helpers), finely sustained its soul.

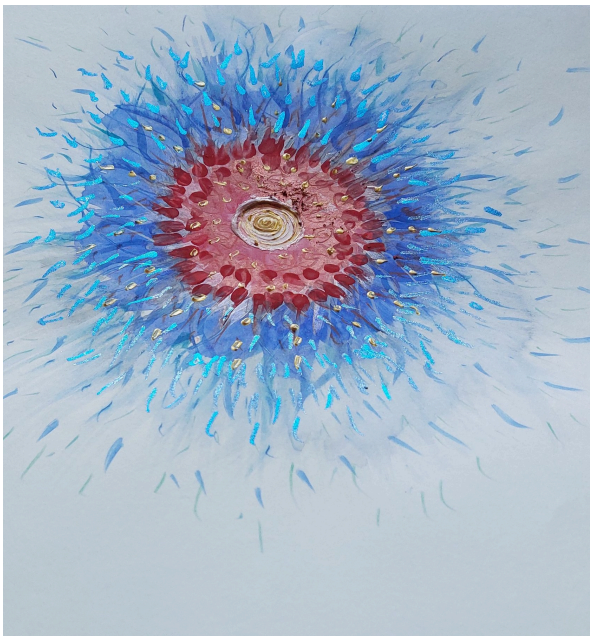
The work thus unfolded in the social sphere as well, and of this I was an attentive and grateful spectator. For my part I thank everyone, because the great majority of the spectators brought an interested and participating gaze, a "palpable substance" that increased the intensity of my movement. Together with my "acting", that gaze created, in the moment, the magic, the lightness and the breadth that many felt. Of this, too, I was an admiring spectator.

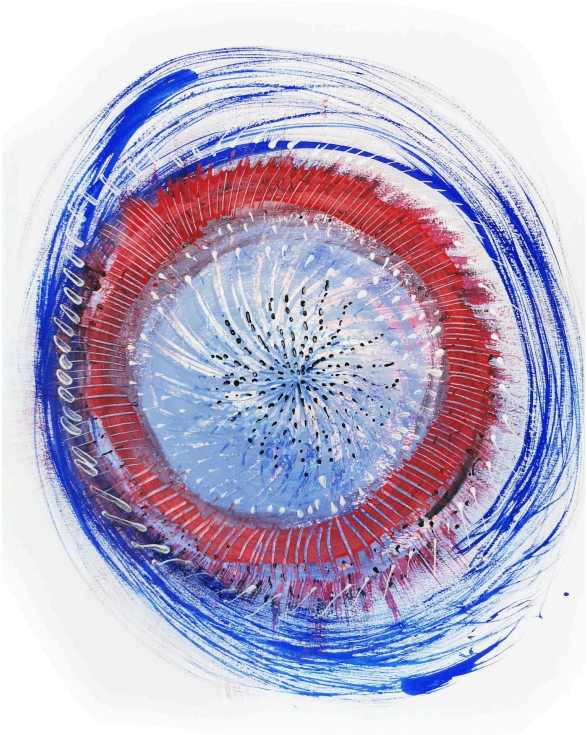


Mya Lurgo, study on canvas, ø 20 cm, 2020

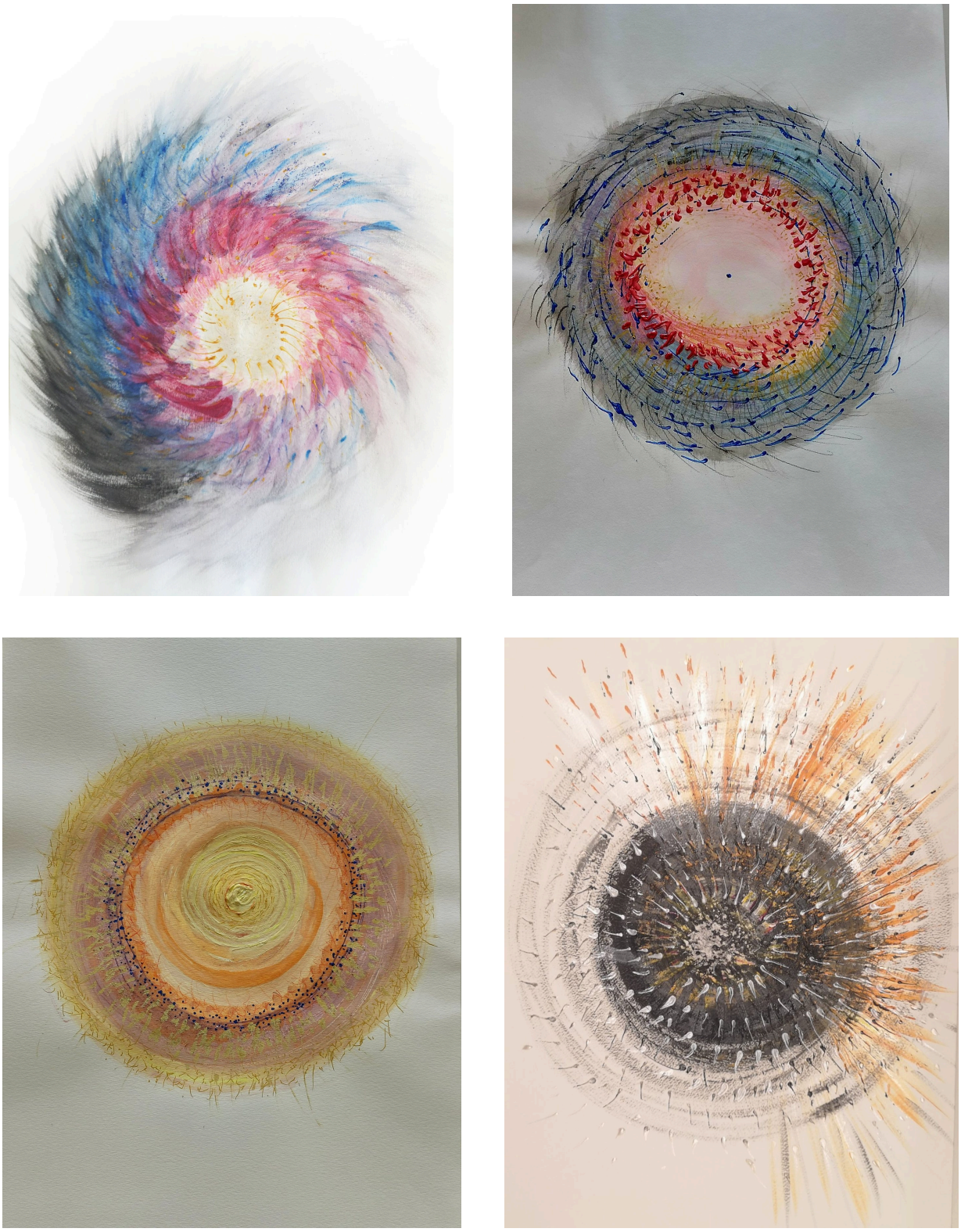








Mya Lurgo, preparatory studies and sketches for *Living Fulcrum*, mixed media on paper, 2019–2020.



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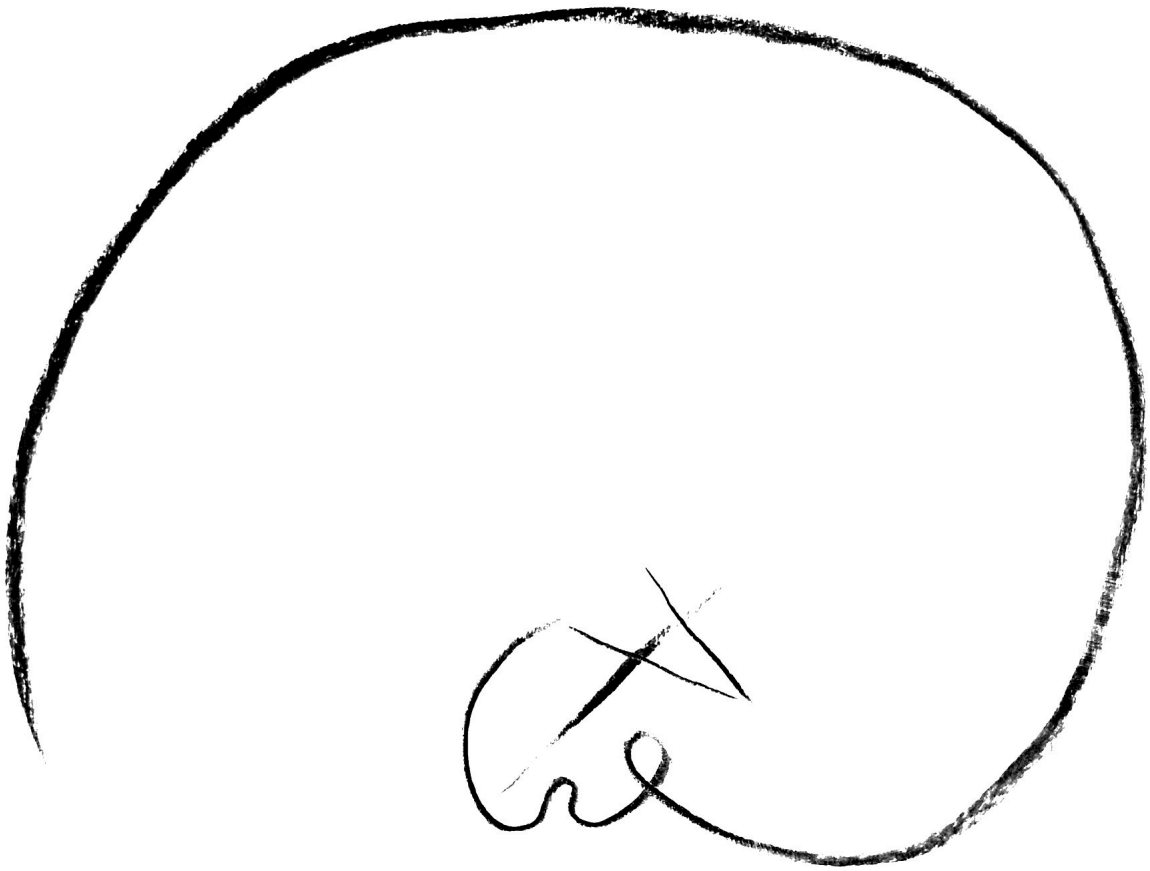
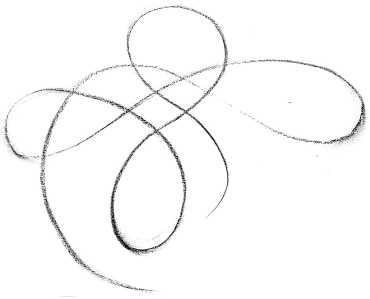


Giovanna Galimberti, *Clear Light, Sigil. Floating Configuration 1* (*Chiara luce, sigillo. Configurazione fluttuante 1*), 2019



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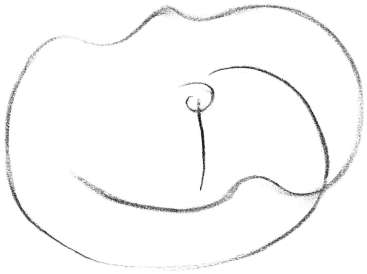

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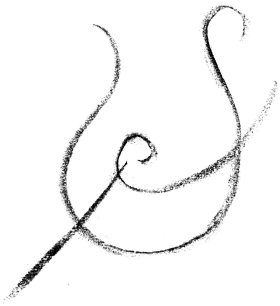

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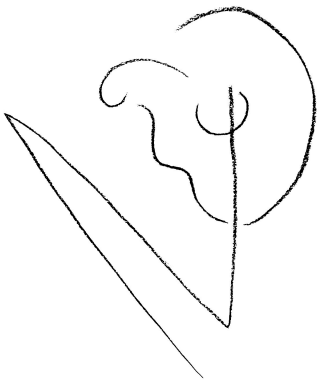

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Giovanna Galimberti, *Dynamics of Floating Configurations on a Poem* (five pieces), charcoal on paper, 29.5 × 42 cm, 2020.
(1) Wings. (2) Queen of Light. Red gesture in the blue. (3) A rose-pink chalice takes form in the heart and holds the spaces. (4) Attentively tending. (5) Child love, in the heart of each, sustains within the breast.

PART VI

VI

In Context

Objective Art seen against the history of art: how the image of the artist, and our way of looking, have been shaped by habit.

Objective Art: A Look into the History of Art

— Alessia Ballabio

This text attempts an analysis of how art, and the artist who gives it form, are perceived, and of how that perception may vary with historical context, in order to show how far our reception is the result of habit, beyond the work itself. Its final aim is to leave a number of questions open, including the main ones: is it possible to create an objective art free from all conditioning? And has anyone already tried to move in that direction?

▲ In one way or another, common opinion tends to see artists as extraordinary individuals. The term does not always carry a positive connotation, however; rather, it conveys that sense of otherness which announces their difference: the difference expected of anyone called an artist, in behaviour as in habits or temperament.[1] Many historians and sociologists explain how certain traits of behaviour that we still tend to attribute to the figure of the artist, like the elements that define the artist's image in our eyes, are in fact the product of historical circumstances that begin in the classical period and then spread, following the same patterns, through the centuries that followed.[2]

A necessary condition for the development of these stereotypes is that works of art begin to be valued specifically for their own qualities, undergoing a kind of secularisation that frees them from serving exclusively religious purposes, and that they begin to constitute, for their makers, an independent and legitimate activity. Artists' biographies, and consequently the fame of the biographers and the fact that artists came to be singled out and regarded as exceptional beings, arise only after these premises. Our inquiry therefore takes root in the fourteenth century, in early humanism, since the further back one goes the more blurred persons and roles become. Moving back through the Middle Ages, the individual traits of artists and their very names seem to fade and merge into the romantic image of the artist who dissolves his personality in a work carried out with others to the greater glory of God. It should also be remembered that, despite this secularisation of artistic production, attitudes that raise art to the status of icon never disappear; they simply keep changing over the centuries.

It is the biographers, from Pliny the Elder to Su Tung-p'o, from Giorgio Vasari to Ghiberti, who secured the survival of artists' fame and drew their portraits with surprisingly constant common features, known as *topoi*.[3] These *topoi*, which serve to mythologise the figure of the maker, fall roughly into two broad

categories. The first concerns anecdotes that explain the circumstances in which the artist's gifts are revealed: the story of the very young Giotto, a shepherd drawing his grazing animals on stones and being noticed by his future master, is the classic example. The second, the one that most concerns us here, aims to leave no doubt about technical ability. All these stories seek to stress how the great masters could apparently imitate nature with such skill as to deceive the viewer. The most typical and recurrent example is the fly painted on the canvas so faithfully that it deceives the eye of the beholder.



Unknown Swabian artist, *Portrait of a Woman of the Hofer Family* (detail), c. 1470. National Gallery, London. A fly is painted on the headdress.

An important factor not to be overlooked is the historical context, and the very different degree of habituation to images of a Renaissance viewer, say, compared with an individual today, continually exposed to every kind of *media*. We would certainly not fall into the same error as those viewers who, seeing a portrait of Pope Paul III painted by Titian and set beside a window to dry, took it for the pope in flesh and blood and paid homage to it. Without taking anything away from the extraordinary quality of the object, this was a time when an image outside its proper context, ecclesiastical or private, and placed at a window could only be taken for the person portrayed. Examples of this kind abound, and all of them may reflect an eye little trained in the reproduced image: Titian's portrait of Charles V, mistaken for the emperor himself (as his son Philip II is said to have done);[4] or the naive cardinal who offered pen and ink to Raphael's portrait of Leo X to ask for a signature.[5]

Finally, it seems significant to close this survey with the most famous of the *topoi*, which tells of sensual love for a statue and was already known in antiquity in a wide range of variants. The story is of interest for two reasons, mentioned here only as a further prompt for reflection on the relationship between image and icon. First, because the statue is believed to be alive not only by the man who offers it his love but also by those who mutilate it to prevent others from falling in love with it.[6] Secondly, because the mutilation is inflicted not on the statue in and for itself but as the personification of the seductive woman. This touches a fundamental point: the magical belief, found almost everywhere, in a real union between the figure (painted or sculpted) and the person represented; in other words, the idea that "a man's soul resides in his image".

The history of art is rich in such examples, which from the classical age and the early Renaissance onwards fill the biographies of every great master. Is this "merely" a long historiographical tradition, reproducing the same *topoi* with variations according to period and place,[7] combined with less visual and perceptual training? If so, why does all this reappear in more recent times? Why does the stereotyped role of the artist show no sign of changing?

In the contemporary period the myths turn into something different, yet they retain the tendency to personify the work of art, making it the symbolic object of particular historical moments and sometimes leading the viewer to exile it or destroy it. A curious case is Memento Park in Budapest, an open-air museum outside the city centre displaying statues from the communist period that once stood in Hungary's streets, parks and public squares and were removed, but not destroyed, after the political changes of 1989–1990, and exiled here. The park was built in 1992–1993 in the capital's 22nd district.

The reasons are always different, but a sense of iconolatry is often palpable in more recent episodes too. There are many cases in which new historical movements make it their prerogative to destroy, not in a wholly metaphorical sense, the old art. One need only think of the avant-gardes, born with critical intent towards their own historical period: in order to create a new aesthetic in opposition to the dominant culture, they often sought to make a clean sweep of the past. And what of the more recent self-destruction of a work, raised to a symbolic act against the art market? We refer to the action of the British *street artist* Banksy, who at a Sotheby's auction in October 2018 triggered a device that began the self-destruction of *Girl with Balloon* a moment after its sale, before an incredulous audience.

In conclusion, this rapid survey of anecdotes was meant to raise the question of how the perception of art and of the figure of the artist is bound to centuries of stereotypes, and how it may vary with our knowledge, the historical context and our perceptual habits, beyond the work itself. Have there been attempts, then, to free art from this whole

aura of *pathos*? Have philosophers and artists tried to theorise a more objective art?

▲ The history of art is closely bound up with the theories of beauty developed by philosophers and scholars who, over the centuries, have sought to understand its choices and at times to guide them. The first questions about a more or less objective art are therefore to be sought in their writings as much as in the results that artists have studied and achieved. It also seems right to narrow the field briefly to the so-called "contemporary" period: the moment when art begins to move ever further from figuration, along a path that coincides chronologically with the birth of the psychology of art, a discipline that investigates and explains the psychological processes involved in making and experiencing a work of art. Its aim is to identify and understand which mental processes are involved in artistic production and which factors determine an artist's poetics and distinctive traits, but also which psychological processes characterise reception, aesthetic appreciation or its absence, and feelings of empathy or sympathy.

The psychology of art is born in the second half of the nineteenth century, at the moment when the Impressionists, the Post-Impressionists and a whole generation of artists were taking their first steps, rejecting *mimesis* in favour of a freer and more expressive method. Significant studies were carried out in those years by Gustav Theodor Fechner (1801–1887), the German psychologist, physicist and physiologist who founded psychophysics. He studied the relations between physical stimuli and psychological experiences and conducted research in the field of art, laying the foundations of what is known as experimental aesthetics.

To return to the theme of this text: Rudolf Arnheim, trained in the school of Gestalt psychology,[8] raises interesting questions about the objectivity of our vision. In his view, artists are able to grasp the universal in the particular by means of the categories of form and colour. A subtle investigator of the perceptual mechanisms underlying visual facts, he argues in *Art and Visual Perception*[9] that perceived shape results from the interplay between the physical object, the light that carries information about it and the state of the observer's nervous system; and that what we see is shaped not by the retinal projection of a single moment alone, but by all the visual experiences we have had of that object, or of similar ones, in the course of our lives.

An important attempt to sublimate everyday experience in order to render reality more objectively can be credited to the Dutch artist **Piet Mondrian**. Abstract art, Mondrian theorises, arises from the awareness that things cannot be represented in images as they are and as they appear in the continual variation of their sensible and visible properties and of our perception. The painter therefore resorts to the denaturalisation of matter, which in painting means abstracting natural colour to its purest possible state, the primary colour, and reducing the scheme of the composition to the crossing of horizontal and vertical lines. This

operation of extreme synthesis is renamed *superrealist art*. *Realist art* and *superrealist art*, Mondrian writes, testify to two totally distinct ways of conceiving reality and life: the first in an individual sense, the second in a universal one.

In a diametrically opposite way, some years later, **Giorgio Morandi** moves in the same direction. From the 1950s, precisely through his celebrated series of still lifes, Morandi abandons the idea of the masterpiece. He pragmatically pursues, within painting and within a single historical genre, the death of the aura, since he no longer believes that the real (a multiple and discontinuous subject), the relative position of the observer and the arbitrary choices of the painter can still be represented in one emblematic, unitary act. Working in series, Morandi varies the composition of the objects, the proportions of the canvas, the viewer's point of view and the framing as a delimiting field. It is precisely through this system of variables, with all the possibilities and contradictions it contains, that Morandi believes his obsessive research can express an absolute beauty.[10]

To close this very brief survey, one last attempt at detachment from the subjective should be recalled, carried out in yet another way: that of **Yves Klein** with his *Anthropométries*. In his *Chelsea Hotel Manifesto* (1961) Klein lists what he regards as established: fifteen years of monochromes, the creation of immaterial pictorial states, the handling of the forces of the void, works drawn from fire and water. He recalls painting with "living brushes", the bodies of models covered in colour and directed by his voice, which let him keep a fixed distance from the surface and so resolve the problem of detachment from the work. The manifesto leaves the artists of the future with a question: might the artist to come be one who, through silence yet for ever, expresses an immense painting that has no notion of dimension?[11]

No less important in the psychology of art is the contribution of psychoanalysis. Among the pioneers of the psychoanalysis of art is Carl Gustav Jung, who after his break with Freud in 1913 developed his own line of research and his own school, known as analytical psychology. But let us proceed in order. Among the main contributions are those of Sigmund Freud to the study of art and literature, notably the essay *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood* (1910), the first model of the "psychobiographical method".[12] This method seeks to understand the work in the light of the study and interpretation of its author's life, above all of childhood psychic activity. In his inquiries into creativity Freud emphasised chiefly the role of the unconscious, at times at the risk of privileging the psychopathological component. He proposed reading the work of art, like the dream, as a two-part text, distinguishing between "manifest content" (the text, the form of the work) and "latent content" (its unconscious meaning). At this moment the idea takes concrete shape that a message from the subconscious exists and must be taken into account and governed.

Freud's psychoanalytic theories had an enormous influence on the culture and art of the avant-gardes, but Freud himself, given his classical education, was personally quite intolerant of contemporary art; on the theoretical plane, too, he held that one could speak of art only where a precise balance was maintained between unconscious and (pre)conscious elaboration, that is, between unconscious content and artistic form.

It should be remembered that once again, as the old biographers had done, critics and exegetes of every rank threw themselves headlong into building, with the new explanatory keys Freud had devised in the clinical field, a new method of aesthetic evaluation. In practice, by misreading the Viennese doctor's indications in good or bad faith, the psychoanalytic criticism of art was born and developed, arousing a certain interest: a line of study that, to the delight of collectors and men of letters, brought to the fore a whole series of anecdotes about artists' lives, identified as the conflicts underlying their creation.

Unlike Freud, Carl Gustav Jung held that it would be reductive to trace the work of art back solely to the psychic life of its author. The creative impulse, in his view, originates in the archetypes common to all humanity (the collective unconscious) and acts almost autonomously, giving expression also to humankind's primordial experiences and moving between the symbolic and the non-symbolic.[13] Jung's relationship with art is fundamentally ambivalent. On the one hand he attaches enormous importance to art and to the artist, who are able to manifest the archetypes of the collective unconscious and, through the relation between conscious and unconscious, to show their different meanings; on the other, since creativity for him acts essentially as an "autonomous process", he pays little attention to the specificity of the artistic gesture.

According to Jung, contemporary artists are right to move in the direction of the unconscious, but they are not sufficiently aware of their task. He nevertheless exerted a notable influence on twentieth-century culture, and many artists were influenced by or drawn to him: to name only a few, Hermann Hesse, Cesare Pavese and T. S. Eliot in literature; Federico Fellini, Jackson Pollock and Adolph Gottlieb in the visual arts. Among his encounters with the intellectuals of his time, one is also said to have taken place with George Ivanovich Gurdjieff, the Greek-Armenian philosopher, mystic, writer and teacher of dance regarded as the theorist of Objective Art.

To make art, as Klee said, is to make visible what is not. It means giving visibility to the things around us, because painting tries to make visible forces that are not, in order to penetrate more deeply the world that surrounds us. To make art is to give a form, even a formless one, to our emotions, to what we have within us, within a creative process.

Each generation, says Bacon, reinterprets more violently, or perhaps only differently, the ways of seeing and feeling the world. The same holds for psychoanalysis: it must be continually reinvented.

The artist and designer Bruno Munari invites us to go beyond the boundaries of what we know, or think we know, in order to experience communication, visual and otherwise, in ever new and original ways. Remaining rigidly anchored to our mental structure narrows perception, hinders the movements of creativity and reduces our chances of grasping fully the value of visual experience: it makes us look without seeing and, therefore, without understanding.

"Everyone sees what they know." This should be taken not as a limit but as an encouragement to keep improving and to expand our knowledge, because only in that way shall we be able to see, recognise and understand, better and more.

Notes

1. See R. and M. Wittkower, *Born under Saturn* (1963); Italian edition *Nati sotto Saturno*, Einaudi, Turin, 2005.
2. Has the time come, then, to free artists from their stereotype (or, at times, alibi) of difference?
3. E. Kris and O. Kurz, *Die Legende vom Künstler* (1934); Italian edition *La leggenda dell'artista*. See also pp. 3–5, where the authors argue that, from the moment an artist's name appears in written records, stereotyped notions attach to the work and the person which still colour the way we judge artists. The volume also documents all these anecdotes extensively.
4. G. Vasari, vol. 8, p. 294; Hartmann, 1917, p. 48.
5. F. Zuccaro, 1607, p. 99.
6. Schwarz, 1921, vol. 4, p. 488.
7. Classical historiography was never entirely lost: it was kept alive, translated and preserved in Byzantium throughout the Middle Ages, and returned to the West after the fall of the Eastern Roman Empire.
8. See https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psicologia_della_Gestalt
9. R. Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1954; Italian edition *Arte e percezione visiva*, Feltrinelli, Milan, 1962; new edition with a preface by Gillo Dorfles, Feltrinelli, Milan, 1979, p. 60.
10. See A. Bruciati, *Giorgio Morandi – Vincenzo Agnetti: differenza e ripetizione*, Palazzo De Sanctis, Castelbasso, 24 July – 11 September 2016.
11. See http://nouveaurealisme.weebly.com/yves-klein-stabilito-che-manifesto-del-chelsea-hotel.html
12. S. Freud, *Saggi sull'arte, la letteratura e il linguaggio*, Bollati Boringhieri, Turin, 1991.
13. Particularly significant in the Jungian perspective are Marie-Louise von Franz's studies of archetypes in fairy tales.

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