

Ways Of Perceiving ADAD4019

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SOUL HAS MASS

For the curation of an art exhibition I would propose 5 artworks and bring to light the existential unease of the contemporary condition, the intent is to explore an emotional evolution through the immersion into a mystical sensorial experience and reflecting on the issues provoked by the “modernization” of society in matters of morality. Based on the concept of Value and Desire “the conflict between desire and desirability”(U.Perone,2014) and partially on the theory formulated by Friedrich Nietzsche *On the Genealogy of Morality* “The human capacity to enjoy life and to implement "good" on earth is seen as an evil on the other end of the social ladder.”(Nietzsche,1887).

These thoughts seems find fundament in some contradictions,intended as privileges and disadvantages,in the Religion(Opus Dei/ clergy,faithfuls) and how progress in our era could mean synonyms of regress (welfare/slavery) (technology/addiction).



Catacombs of San Gaudioso, Naples

The space chosen, a narrow underground tunnel part of Sepulchres Gallery, would be a starting point to initiate the curation as a virtual voyage that induces introspection through the address of contexts such as the passage into immortality, memory, insanity, punishment, religious and artistic repression, how good and evil are inverted and constricted conditions have generated brilliant minds despite all. The Catacomb of Saint Gaudioso are situated in Naples, Italy and the access is possible through the passage into the crypt under the church Basilica of Santa Maria della Sanità. Excavated in tuff stone this subterranean cemetery of the Pleochristian era is rich of history and symbolism like a particular afrescos which reveal "The ephemeral nature of worldly material goods" (Di Martino, 2017) and how death reset everything bringing all of us to the same level. Suffocating aspect and macabre rituals of burials could have the capacity to catapult mentally in a virtual limbo, leading us to rediscover a potential dormant spirituality and contact with the deepest "I".

The recomposition of the missing links of ourselves with the purpose to experiment stages like reflection, admission and action.

The connection between the space and the artworks has been elaborated in a simplistic way, placing the artworks in the order of the cross sign as an act of purification.



Figure One

In the name of the Father: At the end of the tunnel as a substitute of Jesus Christ cross, I position the *Slaughtered Ox* by Rembrandt. The painting depicts a carcass evoking the tortured figure of Christ during his Passion “The killing of the fatted calf at the joyous return of the Son is the symbolic equivalent of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross”(K.Craig,1983) even though a God represented more in flesh rather in Holy Spirit, an overturned body reminds us of the idea of a “Memento mori” that which remains to rot and eviscerating towards the human guilty.

Of Son: “Autobiography begins with a sense of being alone.It is an orphan form” (J.Berger,1993). Alda Merini wrote a poem based on her life’s experience *The Holy Land* during her forced permanence in a mental hospital. Considered schizophrenic,her fault was

being not a domesticated woman, in a hostile contest where being rebel meant having to expiate the sins through the punishment. I would position the poetry on the stone altar as sacred universal Bible to exalt the truthful words of who was witness of how brutality could settle in the human soul by taking over any form of moral ethics.

“I also have had my Palestine, the walls of the asylum were the walls of Jerico and the puddle of infected water baptized us all. We were Jews in there and the Pharisees were high and there was also the Messiah confused in the crowd and a madman shouting to Heaven all his love in God “ (*Alda Merini, 1984*)

Figure Two

The thin line between genius and madness hardly understood back in the day. However, the art has multiple variations, has a free interpretation for those who perceive it and has more visions for those who make it. For those who cling to the faith on the other side could exist the equivalent that repudiated the religion in relation to the indoctrination .



Figure Three

In the Holy: The decision to exhibit the artwork of *Aimilia Balaska* on left is linked to the function of left hemispheres of the human brain which “is compared to what is uncomfortable, unwanted, feminine”(F.Fabbro,1995),sentiments and characteristics that we can perceive from her artwork.

In fact she retraces the memory of a time when she was the product of religious repression She states “I grew up in a very close-knit protestant religious culture where my contact with others outside the church was forbidden....i started to explore themes like the influence of religion on humankind the entrapment within social establishment the role of the woman on it as well as the concealed immorality “ (A.Balaska,2019) A representation of an immobilised

woman with unrevealed somatic traits hidden by a cloth, the dirty arms symbol of contamination not only of spirit but also of a body, "The bible indicate that the body is not useful so we must reject the body and its desire" (Balaska,2019) the reflex of a surrogate identity without a sense of belonging. Nevertheless, it did not prevent the actions of the rebellion which the artist is often an author, the poetic resistance that increased the need to express dissent in a veiled but powerful form. Metaphorical in tone, unresolved, reminiscent, transcendental, frequently the art is the phenomena where the trauma bravely emerges. The "undisciplined" faculty that jeopardizes but frees.

Artists like revolutionaries who have felt the weight of the restrictions and if really could be proved that the soul weighs 21 grams, their anima would weigh a little bit more.

In contemporary condition, surrounded by cynicism and lack of compassion, would it weight less or even nothing? "I have chosen art as my immunisation to fight the demons taking over society"(L.Emektar,2017) Leyla Emektar affirmed. But how we can represent a world affected by egoism and indifference and a consumerist society devoted to superfluous? Galder Gazutulu Urrutia, an emergent movie director, visualized it like a spiral purgatory. "Reminiscent of the Allegory of the Long Spoon parable" (Lee B. 2020) The reproduction of physical and spiritual cannibalism which reminds me of the message written with the blood of Marina Abramovich "With a sharp knife, cut deeply into the middle finger of your left hand. Eat the pain.(Abramovich,1997). The regression of moral values, the degrowth and a potential solution analyzed by Bessett "as a collective imagination coined by the times of consumption and by the ideals of wealth....the path of degrowth takes place with the recovery of sobriety in lifestyles and consumption, in desires and life expectations, freeing from the dependence of the abundance at all costs" (Bessett,2007)

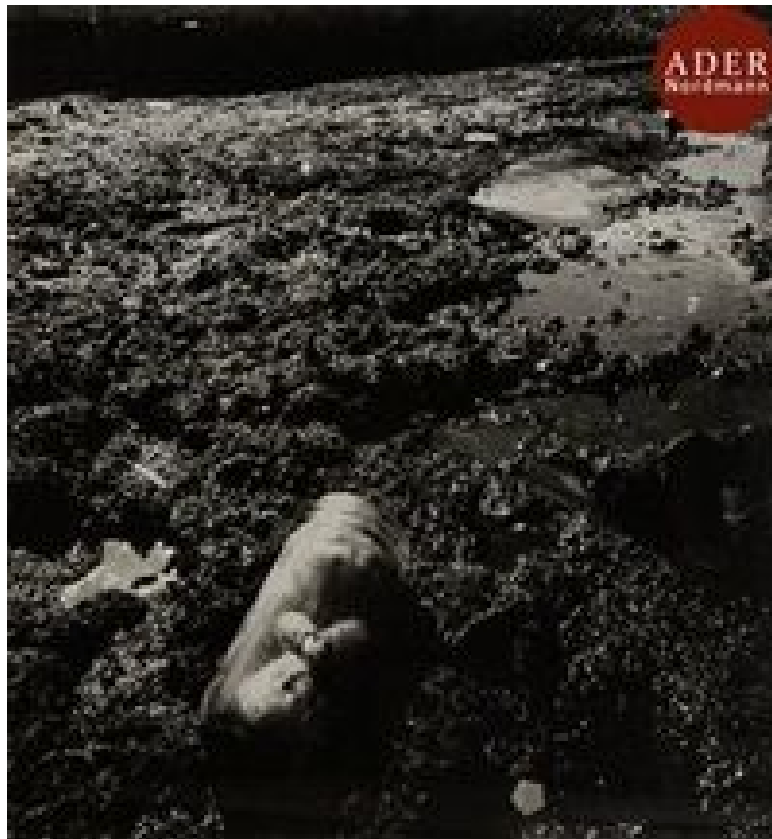


Figure Four

Spirit: Birth Dream by Arthur Tress is associated with the right side of the wall and of the brain hemisphere, the masculine dominant aspect, the aggressive, less emotional and more concrete part as if the artwork had been conceived under a more logical than instinctive force. The photography represents a premature newborn trapped into a jar which seems instead to protect a defenceless human being, a safer stifling involucre that takes the appearance of an amniotic sack. From more profound perspective this claustrophobic “cage” could metaphorically refer to the condition where humans are destined to live? Or a referment to the Ancestral sin? Tress recollects childhood nightmares, a reality which impacts on the subconscious and turns into surrealism.

“So much of today’s photography doesn’t ‘grab us’ or mean anything to our personal lives. ...It fails to touch upon the hidden life of the imagination which is hungry for

stimulation" (Tress,2012) It is inevitable that the *Dream Collector* extrapolate and materialize, in a sort of Freudian interpretation dreams, the permanent memory and dynamics which transforms personas in victims, heroes, winners, losers. This specific image despite belonging to a different age, in fact, could be associated with us, as a contemporary document. Exposed to the pandemic, environmental disasters and mostly to the counterproductive digital era. "Technology, which has made our lives easier in so many ways, has turned into a silent killer"(S.Bawazir 2017). *Birth dream* is more than an uncomfortable feeling and an unconscious fear it seems to represent the blame as mirror of our failings. Why nowadays the humanity became so mediocre losing the poetic perspective?"If we live in a world without legends or myths, if we refuse to live in the abstract therefore how could we create a sublime art?(M Carboni,1993) What are we absorbed by?The incapacity to distinguish?compulsion to belong to a frenetic progressist world? pressure to perform?an overestimation of ourselves? Chase false myths? feeding the alter ego transformed us in devious predators? "Modern solitudes and greed reveal an immense frustration an unbridgeable void, because too much turns into nothing and the envy of anything becomes envy of nothing" (Bessett,2007)

A genre of a race that seems to reflect the Pirandellian theory, "the binomial being-appear" "Being according with needs and exist according with forms of society"(Pirandello,1926)



Figure Five

Amen: Last word of prayer, the passage into the redemption the final artwork *Brides On Tour* of Pippa Bacca would be a message of renewed faith and sense of resilience. Placed and visible only at the exit of tunnel as last step to emerge from abyss, in a new path, strengthened in the spirit. She embarked a long peace trip dressed as bride and her courageous aim was to demonstrate that trusting others was not illusory, she used to wash feet of midwives encountered on her way, symbol of a hymn to life in lands of terror and death. Even though could seem paradoxical associate 2 different "expressions" I visualized this act with the junction of praying hands on belly while whispering Amen, as sign of ends of a conflict, a reconciliation with interiority, the fertile part of human body, not intended as a maternal womb and the explicit development of embryo into life cycle but figuratively as a fulcrum of emotions, rebirth and celebration of life, the sensation to feel molded in a new skin and understand who we were, who we are, who we want to be.

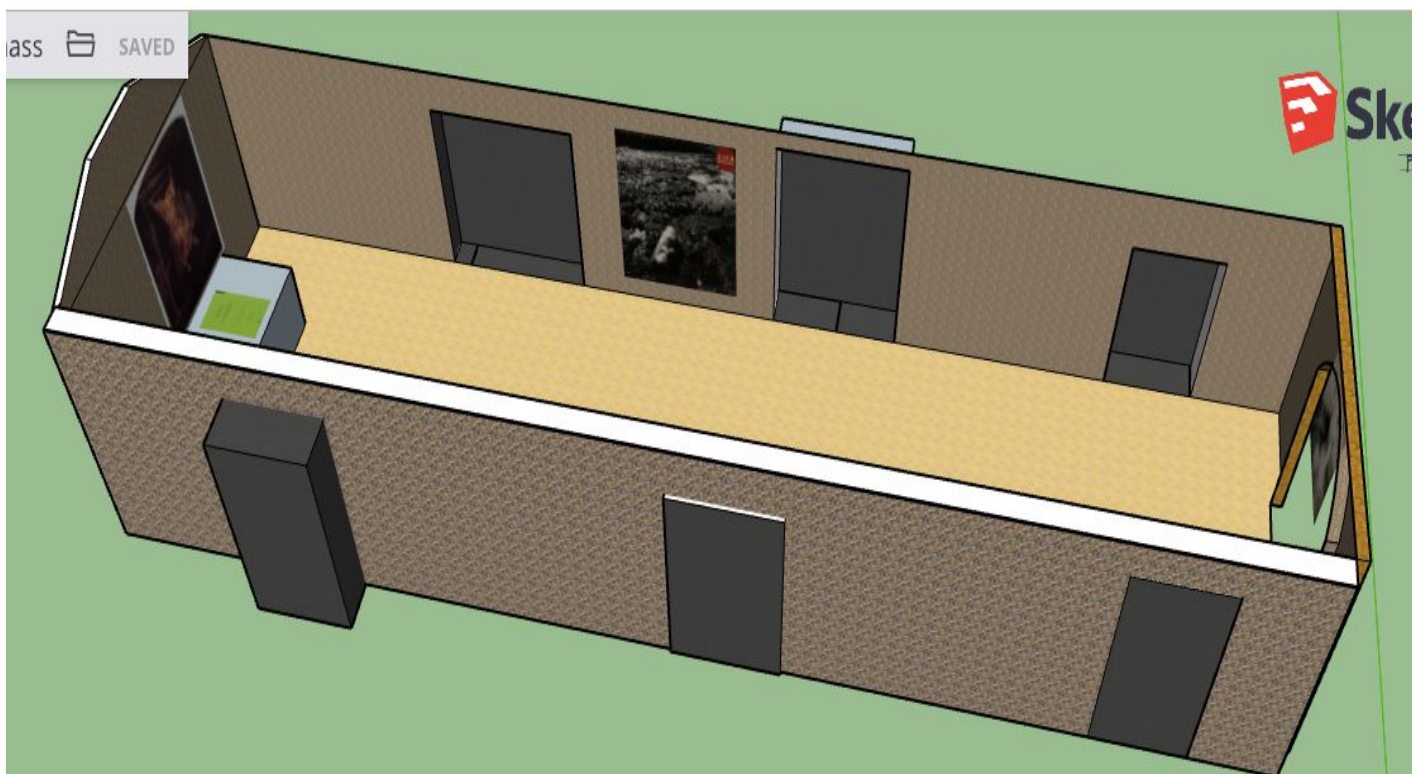
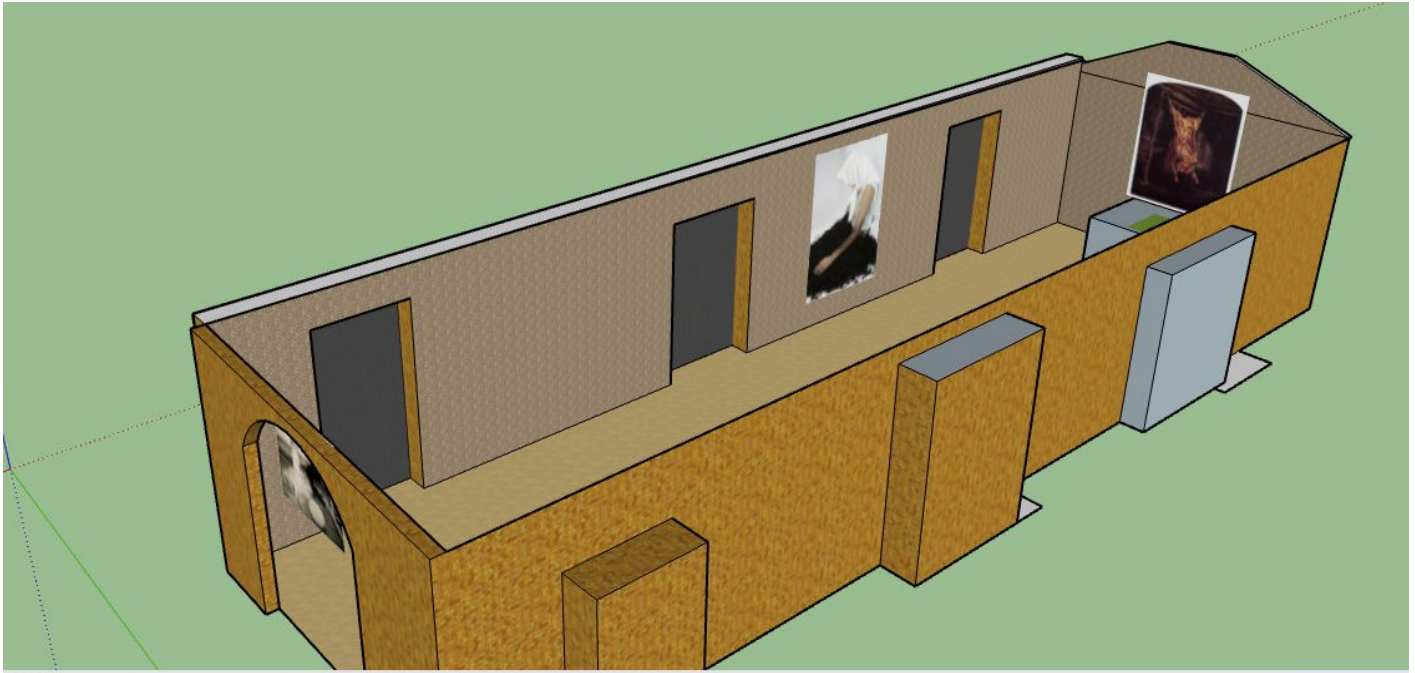
FIG ONE: At the end of the tunnel

FIG TWO: On the altar

FIG THREE: Left hand side

FIG FOUR: Right hand side

FIG FIVE: Internal wall up on the exit arch



FIGURES:

Fig One: Rembrandt (1655) *Slaughtered Ox*. Louvre Museum, Paris

Fig Two: Merini A. (1984) *La Terra Santa*. Milano, Scheiwiller

Fig Three: Balaska A. (2019) *Miasma* (Photograph, digital print)

Fig Four: Tress A. (1972) *Birth Dream*, The Dream Collector (Photograph, digital print)

Fig Five: Bacco P. (2008) *Brides on Tour*, Performance

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