

# TELEVISION AS MEMORY

In talking of television as memory — and that is of video-documentation — I would like to underline how this activity is only a moment in a very complex situation of relationships between art and television.

And in fact the practical activity of the Video Library directed by me is continually intersected with the theoretic elaboration on video which I did in 1972 and which was realised in the “classification of the methods of use of the videotape in art”, a classification which in its own turn derived from the practical work previously carried out.

In this classification I distinguished two fundamental situations: the first in which the artist has a *direct* relationship of use within the television means — which gives place to the “videotape” understood as a work, to the video-performance and to the video-environment.

The second situation is, on the contrary, based on a *mediated* relationship between the artist and the television means: others use the video *on* the work of the artist.

This second situation gives rise to divers hypotheses which can more or less be taken back to information, and in particular to video-documentation, to video-criticism, to video-didactics, to video-history of art, to video-reportage etc.

Without entering into the details of these various classes, which after 1972 were also elaborated by others, I would very synthetically like to underline the most characteristic aspects of video-documentation.

Before anything else this work is born from the need/possibility of leaving a televisual memory of events, like the performance, the concert, the theatrical show and other situations of which, otherwise, no trace whatever would remain.

Video-documentation thus constitutes a form of expansion of the original phenomenon, as it is later being able to be seen by a much larger quantity of spectators than those of the original show. Technically the video, with the very simplified possibility of recording in “real time”, has opened up perspectives which were unthinkable merely with the use of film or photography.

From the ideological point of view the main problem of video-documentation is that of objectivity, considering that it is a question of “reproducing” the work of others.

The same problem had already been posed for photography and the film, used for analogous ends, and faced by the characteristic “aberrations” of these means one had gradually concluded the impossibility of a real objectivity: photography being too often mystifying and cinema distorting the work with its own presence on the scene of the event.

Also for television, which while it operates in con-

ditions of difficult lighting, “obstructs” less than the cinema, allowing the following of the proceeding of the work on a monitor, there is no doubt that it cannot be considered as total objectivity, both due to technical as well as to psychological factors.

From a technical point of view there first of all exists the morphological waste between the three-dimensional image of reality and the bidimensionality of the televisual reproduction. From a “human” point of view it is clear that the vision of the person who carries out the video-documentation constitutes a filter between the work of the artist and his television public.

These factors may tend to a zeroing above all if the person who carries out the televisual documentation profoundly knows both the technical means as well as the work of the artist and, in second place, if he allows himself a faculty of “restitution” of the work of the artist.

In the impossibility of a total objectivity it is in fact evident that it is necessary to recognise a character of autonomy in video-documentation and, moreover, it is by now acquired that, according to the characteristics of the work and the persons for whom it is destined, it is possible to carry out various types of documentative interventions and here, in fact, are the various aspects of the classification like video-criticism, video-didactics etc.

These diversifications have some very important technical aspects and in fact depending on the various objectives it is possible to effect documentations with a single camera — fixed or in action — with the simultaneous direction of various telecameras, with multiple recordings and post-production phase edition.

In order to complete this extremely synthetic discussion on video-documentation the determining importance of the vision of the “finished product” should be underlined, precisely from the perceptive point of view, given the large range of the same which goes from monitors of a few inches up to gigantic telescreens.

Notwithstanding these wide technical possibilities one very often finds oneself verifying a situation which is still very limited on the “circuit” level for which it is to be hoped that as soon as possible television transmitters, museums and universities can consider themselves as being more fluid channels of diffusion of a work which, by definition, has an essential need of circulation.



Video-installazione, 1975