

DON'T TRUST THE MEDIA

by Marco Mancuso for Digicult

“There are people who believe in nothing from the day they are born. This doesn't mean that they cannot take action, do something with their lives, be busy with something, produce something. Other people have the habit of believing: duties become real before their eyes in the form of ideals to be realised. If one day they will stop believing, perhaps slowly, through a successive, logical, or maybe even illogical series of disillusionments, they will rediscover that “nothingness” that for others has always been so natural”. (Pier Paolo Pasolini, Petrolio, 1975)

“The more he contemplates, the less he lives; the more he accepts the fact of recognising himself in the dominant images of need, the less he will understand his own existence and desire.” (Guy Debord, La società dello spettacolo, 1967)

“Internet is the first means of communication, which will soon be of mass communication, that has developed an ironic awareness in the spectator. For this the distribution of false and paranoid information on the net surely is not dangerous”. (Franco Berardi Bifo, Spunti di riflessione, 1996).

In an article from the now distant time of 1973 entitled *Acculturazione e acculturazione* (Socialization and socialization), Pier Paolo Pasolini, from the columns of the Italian newspaper "Il Corriere della Sera", manifested the responsibility of television as a mass medium, an instrument for control.

According to the Italian director, writer and essay writer, television is the direct manifestation of the spirit of power. A new modern fascist power, capable of using means for communication and information to its advantage, increasingly refined in operating not only as through-joints, but as centres for the elaboration of various kinds of messages.

Branded as an alarmist and reactionary in his era, Pasolini's discourse is still terribly current. What actually surprises is the stubborn impermeability of man toward a desire and capacity to learn from his mistakes; most of all, and it's sad to admit, despite the arrival of Internet and new digital media. The spreading of these media over vast areas of the planet, their intrinsic capacity to integrate themselves into modern societies of consumption and information, their logarithmic factor of development in relation to concepts of integration, their portability, locative and interconnection, over the span of a few years have made

them means of massification, control and deceit of the most potentially pervasive kind that the history of man has ever known.

Perhaps by thinking in this direction the distinction between new and old media finally and definitively crumbles: TV and the net, analogical and digital technologies, risk being overcome by a process of convergence that is dangerous, especially in social terms. This process does not regard the often flagged problem of freedom of information (in this sense Internet has the capacity to self-regenerate, developing new technologies endemically, getting around systems of censorship and making space for itself in small and large niches of freedom of expression), but rather the increasing lacking of being critical regarding the transmitted content. If on the one hand TV bombards us daily with alarming visions, economical collapses, preventive wars, climatic abuse, global pandemics, on the other Internet does not come short, recalling and amplifying this flux of images, sounds and information, integrating them and branching out into the new system of virtual connections.

But there's a second democratic risk factor that this phenomenon of integration brings with it, that is perhaps more important than the first. It is what the MEDIAGATE exhibition wants to indicate as a "great case of the media". Are we in fact certain that all the news that leaks through the meshes of contemporary mass media are true, without conditioning and not the fruit of a complex strategy that feeds new fears, paranoia, myths, religions in function to a superior social and economical plan? What are the true emergencies of the beginning of this century? What are the real fears that man should suffer? If television and internet bombard us daily with new alarms, what are the antibodies that we need to develop in order to defend our capacity of judgement?

Well, art is certainly one of these antibodies. The MEDIAGATE exhibition, through the selected artists and critics and curators of the DIGICULT network, underlines how those forms of remediation and audiovisual manipulation of analogical and digital technologies (Mylicon/En), the critical use of software potential in the dynamics of social networking (Les Liens Invisibles), the game-like reconsideration of multi-media content share on the Net (Marc Lee), the emphasis of the rapport between man and technology in interactive terms (Dorota Walentynowicz) and intellectual terms (Yorit Kluitman), as well as the integration between the languages of video and motion-graphics (Jan Van Neuen), are all capable of arousing the right questions, doubts and thoughts in contemporary man. Because perhaps one day we will find the necessity to have to build an autonomous media zone, as Sašo Sedlaček, the last artist in the exhibition, suggests. Because the Infocalypse is Now, and perhaps we all have nowhere left to run!