



Exhibition: **FABRIZIO PLESSI: 1970-2005**
IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern
28 June – 26 August 2007

Organised by: IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern

Curated by: Consuelo Císcar



Sponsored by:

Fabrizio Plessi, one of the most influential video artists today, combines his fascination for materiality that comes from Italian Arte Povera tradition with video, experimental media and site-specific installations. All his monumental Baroque installations include natural forces like water and fire, juxtaposed with elements from the building world in an attempt to make us reconsider our own ideas about history, memory and landscapes, whether natural or man-made.

The exhibition presented at the IVAM comprises the installations *Water Circles*, *Armadio Bianco - Armadio Rosso - Armadio Nero* (White Cupboard - Red Cupboard - Black Cupboard), *Ice*; *Narciso* (Narcissus), *Stanza del Mare* (Sea Room), *Cristallo Liquido* (Liquid Glass), *Arco Liquido* (Liquid Arch). *Mare Orizzontale* (Horizontal Sea), *Water Wind*; *Reflecting Water*, *Waterfall*, *Art and Videoland*, including an installation with projects from other installations made in different cities. The catalogue published for the exhibition contains texts by Jaime Siles, Marco Tonelli and the director of the IVAM and curator of the exhibition

Consuelo Císcar, along with a biography of Plessi, and is illustrated with images of the installations displayed.

Fabrizio Plessi (Reggio Emilia, Italy, 1940) studied art in Venice at the Liceo Artistico and the Accademia delle Belle Arti, where he later became professor of painting. Already at this early date, from 1968 onwards, water was the central theme of his work, appearing again and again in his installations, films, videos and performances. In his work, it goes in two directions, both as conceptualisation of aquatic images and different direct actions with water as the protagonist. His work is characterised in that it combines his fascination for materiality that comes from Italian Arte Povera tradition with video, experimental media and site-specific installations.

In this way, in his work the ambiguity of the visual image is reflected, the deceptive perception of reality through the senses and man's relationship with his environment. He makes us meditate about the origin of everything. Also important are the time factor, memory and recollections in a constant dialectic of opposing concepts: essence-appearance, interior-exterior, object-concept, natural-artificial, conscious-unconscious, reality-representation, unity-plurality, reason-intuition, etc.

Water has been a constant element in his work for over thirty years, a metaphor of creation, reflection, progression and transformation. It is never used as a physical reality but as a video image. The video monitor is the protagonist, a metaphor of modern society and its most popular means of communication, fulfilling the function of a window open to other realities. Plessi takes from Arte Povera the conceptual idea of the artwork, the use of unmanipulated found materials, enhancing their transforming energetic power, including sound capable of modifying spaces.

He took part in the exhibition at the experimental pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1970 and the following year. In the period between 1975 and 1983 he held a series of exhibitions in different places, including the following: the Palazzo dei Diamanti in Ferrara (1975), the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus in Munich (1978), the Internationaal Cultureel Centrum in Antwerp (1980) and the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels (1975, 1983). He took part in the Venice Film Festival with his film *Liquid Movie* and won the Città di Milano award in 1980, and the next year he

showed the film *Underwater*, a French production, at the Venice Film Festival. It was the first time electronic media were included in a film festival.

In 1982 the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris exhibited all his video works. Around that time he began to delve into spatial conditions and the options they afforded video art, incorporating three dimensions into his work by making installations. The illusory relationship between the reality of the liquid element and its representation was further consolidated thanks to the technological possibilities of electronic and mechanical playback in continual expansion.

In the mid nineties he carried out numerous projects such as the video installations *Fuochi fatui* (Will o' the Wisp) for the Fundació Pilar i Joan Miró in Palma de Mallorca and he made some of his more complex elaborate installations, among others: *Il fiume della storia* (The River of History) for the Landesmuseum in Mainz; *Fez-Fez* for the Mausoleum in Graz; *Acquedotto elettronico* (Electronic Aqueduct) for the Heidelberger Kunstverein and *Mysterium Wein* for the Historische Museum der Pflaz de Séller, and to celebrate the inauguration of the Città della Scienza in Naples, Plessi made the videosculpture *Movimenti catodici barocchi* (Cathodic Baroque Movements). In recent decades he has worked on monumental pieces with creations like the video installation *Liquid Time*, produced by Philips for the Berlin Trade Fair and later purchased by the Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie in Karlsruhe, or the work commissioned by the Italian government for EXPO 2000 in Hanover, *Mare verticale* (Vertical Sea), a 44-metre high steel structure with a LED screen that electronically simulates the movement of the ocean; he also created a gigantic electronic waterfall rendered in a colour spectrum with 16 million variations that was inaugurated in 2000 for the Sony Centre on Berlin's Potsdamer Platz, designed by the architect Helmut Jahn

Another aspect of Plessi's oeuvre is his work as a scenographer and decorator for plays like *Sciame* by Enzo Cosimi, which was performed at the opening of the Rovereto Festival and *The Fall of Icarus*, a production of the Opéra Nationale de La Monnaie from Brussels, in collaboration with Frédéric Flamand and Michael Nyman. He has also designed electronic sets for collaborations with Frédéric Flamand like *Titanic*, performed at the Musée de L'Industrie in Charleroi, and the opera *Ex machina*, performed by students of the Cologne Academy of Media Arts.

Fabrizio Plessi has also dedicated himself to teaching and is a professor of Humanising Technology at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne, where he has been teaching Electronic Scenography since 1994. Fabrizio Plessi lives and works in Venice and Majorca.

Among the awards he has been granted, it is worth mentioning especially the Miró Medal he received from UNESCO in Paris. He also received a prize at the XIII Quadriennale di Roma and in 1999 he was granted the Artist of the Year Award by the Nord/LB bank in Hanover, Germany.