

## **THE REPETITION OF THE DIFFERENCE : TIME AND SPACE IN CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE ART**

by P. Bianchi in International Symposium, REPETITION/S Performance and Philosophy in Ljubljana, Ljubljana, 2016, p. 26

[...] one square centimeter of any blue is not as blue as a square meter of the same blue” (Matisse, 1940, 2004: 95)

[...] Luca Resta is an Italian young artist based in Paris who, for 12 days, has literally covered the gallery space (from floor to ceiling) with layers of paper tape, through a manic gesture of overlapping.

Superposition is a performance, but also a sort of decorative technique exasperated by a manic overlapping of strips of tape stretched out horizontally, from the bottom to the top. Each strip is overlapped to the previous one (with 4/5 mm distance), to create a wallpaper, a second skin that adapts and redesigns the architecture. The performance connects the action and the time; it is a mechanical and repetitive gesture that does not have a point of arrival, it could ideally go on forever. Only the duration of the exhibition determines the performance time. On this subject, the artist speaks about a specific “time” dedicated to something apparently useless. Resta plays thus with the main significance of the manual work and, in doing so, he puts into discussion the daily condition of the man and the paradoxes of society.

In the case of Superposition's first realization, in a Parisian gallery, the exhibition lasted 12 days. The artist used 11,850 meters of tape (that is 237 rolls), thus obtaining a membrane compact and geometrically perfect. He worked, like an employer, for 10 hours a day, trying to cover the entire space. However, since the work focuses on the idea of repetition and monotony, there is not a real objective. The artist doesn't want to cover the entire space, Resta wants only spent his time making a useless, a repetitive and alienated action. It is a slow and regular movement that simulate the action of a printer. Furthermore, the mechanical and rhythmic noise produced during the action marks the time and articulates the action, dilating the sound's repetition in the space.

Even if the idea is based on the repetition of the gesture, each repetition of the performance is different as the place of the action. It is thus a creative repetition, unique and different, every time. Last April, for example, the artist realized this performance on the staircase at the Palais de Tokyo, in Paris, during Do disturb, a 3 days' manifestation. For this exhibition, the duration of the repetitive action was three days, 12 hours a day.

In the work of Luca Resta, the concepts of space, duration, and repetition intersect each other, visually translating what Bergson defined as the essential dimension in the constitution of the number and series. In this regard, without going into the specificity of the Bergsonian thesis, I nevertheless want to see in the duration notion, the passive synthesis of which Deleuze talks in his text *Difference et Repetition*. In other words, I consider the concept of duration as the juxtaposition of quantifiable impressions in an auxiliary space, where the clock's hands (just to evoke Bergson famous example) lose their uniqueness to become part of a whole, of a time.

In his performances, the exhibition space becomes a theater in which the repetitive action is built. In this regard, the artist superposes not only strips of scotch, but also instants which mark the rhythm and draw the representation. The automatic and mechanical gesture becomes a ritual act, a sort of mantra played in a specific temporal dimension. This proposes thus a new skin for the space, a new gaze on the place. The artist's

movement is thus the device that highlights the repetition as an artistic, performative and creator act.

In this sense, for the Luca Resta the concept of series and sequence must be understood as a unit and simultaneously as a plurality of different repetitions. The recurrence of a performative action in different spaces becomes an event, a total work. That's why, finally, according to Deleuze, we can see in the iteration "an active force [...] producing difference" (Deleuze Dictionary, 223).

To conclude, according to the role that repetition takes on in their gestures, the four artists exploit the concept of time and temporality differently: 12 hours for the artist duo Elmgreen & Dragset, one year for the curatorial project of Tino Sehgal, one minute for Nadia Vadori Gauthier, 12 days, or a time of exhibition for Luca Resta. The performance's duration is, therefore, a constitutive parameter both for the importance given to the repetition and for the constant presence of the gesture in the time. Here, the difference lives in the sense of spatial dilatation of the gesture which articulate repetitive actions.

That is repeated in the time is not the Identical, but identical is the repetition of what is repeated: that's the difference, the aesthetic specificity that, in doing so, puts into the question the ontological sense of the artistic creation and the performance exhibition.

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