

Bonis Bona, Malis Mala - Nicola Lorini

curated by Azzurra Pitruzzella

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What makes us humans is our ability to signify, to create meaning, to accumulate it and to shape memory. Meanings are fundamental tools to the individual and collective creation of reality: they produce a common field through which we communicate, think, easily navigate the world and to exist.

Historical research has an essential role in the creation of meanings: it selects, elects winners and losers, joints facts creating a post-hoc linear and rational logic. It establishes a fixed and vertical order to contain and digest meanings and, immobilising them, makes them finite, tangible and stable, like pillars. They are, instead, fragile and arbitrary, they go through walls, like fluids.

The irruption of the digital method has undermined and questioned the verticality and stability of meanings of the traditional historical research: the limitlessness of the accessible information, its coexistence and the absence of spatial and temporal boundaries, weaken its rigidity which, in the internet, acquire limitless possibilities and create infinite possible connections.

Bonis Bona, Malis Mala is a show that strains the linearity, completeness and verticality on which traditional historiography lies. Historical elements like archaeological remains, sculptural pieces and commemorative monuments are analysed through an approach inspired by digital culture that introduces empathy, fluidity and horizontality, limitlessness and coexistence of information as research criteria. Here meanings are dismembered, become unrecognizable and fragmentary, free themselves from the fixed logic in which they have been forced and go back to their primary fluidity.

The exhibition features ceramic and sand sculptures mixed with production waste pieces. They are inspired by pre-Columbian archaeological remains, sculptural elements from the Monumental Cemetery of Milan, mythical Japanese figures masks, all elements originally pregnant of symbolism from which they are emptied and made available to absorb new meanings. The collocation of the pieces in the space does not follow a hierarchic order they, in fact, are all places on the same semantic level and, taken out of context and nature, create new and infinite energy circuit where they can exist and signify.

Nicola Lorini (b. 1990, Como) is an artist and researcher based between London and Milan. He works across sculpture, installation and lens based media, in an ongoing negotiation between empathic behaviours and archaeological metaphors. Often working with culturally charged artefacts and symbols, he pairs diverse points of inspiration to instigate a dialogue between material production and the interpretation and transmission of information.

Nicola Lorini received his MA in Fine Art from Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design and his recent exhibitions include: 2018, *Metadata*, Lethaby Gallery, London, curated by the Bilderfahrzeuge Project (Warburg institute); 2017, *And The Horizon Was Dying Over the Tourist*, Republic Gallery, London, curated by Federico Sargentone; *Take me Out* (with Bora Akinciturk), 97 Graham Road, London, curated by STIMULI; *Annihilation Event Prototype* (Tate Exchange), Tate Modern Switch House, London, curated by Louisa Minkin and Elizabeth Wright; *Distributed Monuments*, Geddes Gallery, London, curated by Naomi Ellis; *Taiyr* (with Fatima Bianchi), Ex Chiesa di S. Pietro in Atrio, Como, curated by Davide Giannella.

Azzurra Pitruzzella (b. 1990, Agrigento) is an independent curator that divides her activity between London and Italy. After graduating in Philosophy and the University of Catania, in 2017, she concluded a MA in Culture Criticism and Curation and Central Saint Martins in London. Some of her projects include: "Heritage: a User's Manual" at the Southbank Centre in London and "Self/Control" at Punctum gallery. Her upcoming projects include an artists' residency at the archaeological park of Scolacium in Calabria, Italy, next September. Born and raised in Agrigento, the city of the valley of temples, Azzurra has always been fascinated by archaeology. Her research, in fact, engages themes like the mechanisms behind the persistence of historical memory in the present and, above all, in the contemporary mind, influenced and accelerated by the digital.

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A (POSSIBLE) HISTORY OF MATTER ACCORDING TO MY GOOGLE SEARCH

Mother of Aeneas's sons, joy of men and gods, the life-giver, who beneath the gliding stars of heaven fillest with life the sea that carries the ships and the land that bears the crops; for thanks to thee every tribe of living things is conceived, and comes forth to look upon power of the light of the sun. (1)

By 'God' I understand: a thing that is absolutely infinite, i.e. a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, each of which expresses an eternal and infinite essence. (2)

Absolute: ab (off) + solver (to loosen) The absolute is that which is *loosened off* and on the loose. When, for example, a Catholic priest performs the act of ab-solution, he is the vehicle of a divine agency that loosens sins from their attachment to a particular soul: sins now stand apart, displaced foreigners living a strange, impersonal life on their own. (3)

D3: By 'substance' I understand: what is in itself and is conceived through itself, i.e. that whose concept doesn't have to be formed out of the concept of something else. (2)

Then again we smell the manifold scents of things, and yet we do not ever descry them coming to the nostrils, nor do we behold warm heat, nor can we grasp cold with the eyes, nor is it ours to descry voices; yet all these things must needs consist of bodily nature, inasmuch as they can make impact on our senses. (1)

D2: A thing is said to be 'finite in its own kind' if it can be limited by something else of the same nature. For example, every body counts as 'finite in its own kind' because we can always conceive another body that is even bigger. And a thought can be limited by—i.e. can count as finite because of—another thought that somehow exceeds it. But a body can't be limited by a thought or a thought by a body. (2)

By the city-gates the brazen statues reveal that their right hands are wearing thin through the touch of those who greet them ever and again as they pass upon their way. All these things then we see grow less, as they are rubbed away: yet what particles leave them at each moment, the envious nature of our sight has shut us out from seeing. (1)

For that body exists is declared by the feeling which all share alike; (1)

The etymology of *Mât* means to make by hand, to measure, to construct, which has to do with matter, but it is also more than matter in terms of its physical constitution. *The materiality comes from the resolution of tensions in and between multiple levels of realities.* (4)

Once, as I was walking through the deserted streets of a provincial town in Italy which was strange to me, on a hot summer afternoon, I found myself in a quarter the character of which could not long remain in doubt. Nothing but painted women were to be seen at the windows of the small houses, and I hastened to leave the narrow street at the next turning. But after having wandered about for a while without being directed, I suddenly found myself back in the same street, where my presence was now

beginning to excite attention. I hurried away once more, but only to arrive yet a third time by devious paths in the same place. Now, however, a feeling overcame me which I can only describe as uncanny..." (5)

(1) the *causa materialis*, the material, the matter out of which, for example, a silver chalice is made; (2) the *causa formalis*, the form, the shape into which the material enters; (3) the *causa finalis*, the end, for example, the sacrificial rite in relation to which the chalice required is determined as to its form and matter; (4) the *causa efficiens*, which brings about the effect that is the finished, actual chalice, in this instance, the silversmith (6)

I was repelled by the dead (or was it merely sleeping?) rat and dismayed by the litter, but I also felt something else: a nameless awareness of the impossible singularity of *that* rat, *that* configuration of pollen, *that* otherwise utterly banal, mass-produced plastic water-bottle cap. (3)

A1: Whatever exists is either in itself or in something else. ·As we have already seen, a substance is in itself, a mode is in something else.· (2)

An ant is crawling on a patch of sand. As it crawls, it traces a line in the sand. By pure chance the line that it traces curves and re-crosses itself in such a way that it ends up looking like a recognizable caricature of Winston Churchill. Has the ant traced a picture of Winston Churchill, a picture that depicts Churchill? Most people would say, on a little reflection, that it has not. The ant, after all, has never seen Churchill, or even a picture of Churchill, and it had no intention of depicting Churchill. It simply traced a line (and even that was unintentional), a line that we can 'see as' a picture of Churchill. (7)

D5: By 'mode' I understand: a state of a substance, i.e. something that exists in and is conceived through something else. (2)

The rise of the Web from the 90s and to the population of the semantic Web since the 2000s, present us, as I would like to suggest, with the latest stage of the development of data technics. This materiality no longer finds itself in the physical contacts of gears, the contact of electrons, but rather the abstraction of data. (4)

8: Every substance is necessarily infinite. (2)

Fluids travel easily. They 'flow', 'spill', 'run out', 'splash', 'pour over', 'leak', 'flood', 'spray', 'drip', 'seep', 'ooze' (8)

FOAF is a descriptive vocabulary expressed using the [Resource Description Framework](#) (RDF) and the [Web Ontology Language](#) (OWL). Computers may use these FOAF profiles to find, for example, all people living in Europe, or to list all people both you and a friend of yours know. (9)

16: From the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many ways i.e. everything that can fall under an unlimited intellect. (2)

Thou, goddess, thou dost turn to flight the winds and the clouds of heaven, thou at thy coming; for thee earth, the quaint artificer, puts forth her sweet-scented flowers; for thee the levels of ocean smile, and the sky, its anger past, gleams with spreading light. (1)

in the reality of the Web, digital objects are at the same time forms and material relations supported by strings, characters, numbers (there are different realities, downwards, such as binary codes, signals, voltage differences, etc). Within the Web, relations are sublated [*aufgehoben*] to a higher level of reality (compared with mediative relations, mechanical and mathematical relations). (4)

As I have already noted, the items on the ground that day were vibratory – at one moment disclosing themselves as dead stuff and at the next as live presence: junk, then claimant; inert matter, then live wire. It hit me then in a visceral way how American materialism, which requires buying ever-increasing numbers of products purchased in ever shorter cycles, is *antimateriality*. (3)

13: A substance that is absolutely infinite is indivisible.

The existence of digital objects is constituted by the materialized milieu which gives it an identity, which does not come from the “matter” (considering a Youtube video), nor from the imposition of form, but by the relations *in it, created by it, and that surround it* (4)

In a sense, solids cancel time; for liquids, on the contrary, it is mostly time that matters. (8)

a digital object and its relation to other objects cannot be explained by its representation on the screen of digital devices, neither by signals, or voltage differences. This materiality seems to come from elsewhere (a different reality or order of magnitude). (4)

In a sense, solids cancel time; for liquids, on the contrary, it is mostly time that matters. When describing solids, one may ignore time altogether; in describing fluids, to leave time out of account would be a grievous mistake. (8)

We can perhaps say that the relation between a natural object and atoms is analogous to that between a digital object and digitized relations, these relations are material as well as conceptual. (4)

if time utterly destroys whatsoever through age it takes from sight, and devours all its substance, how is it that Venus brings back the race of living things after their kind into the light of life, or when she has, how does earth, the quaint artificer, nurse and increase them, furnishing food for them after their kind? how is it that its native springs and the rivers from without, coming from afar, keep the sea full? how is it that the sky feeds the stars? For infinite time and the days that are gone by must needs have devoured all things that are of mortal body. (1)

- 1 http://files.libertyfund.org/files/2242/Lucretius_1496_Bk.pdf
- 2 <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/spinoza1665.pdf>
- 3 <https://huminst.uic.edu/docs/default-source/default-document-library/bennettch1.pdf?sfvrsn=0>
- 4 http://digitalmilieu.net/documents/Hui_form%20and%20relation.pdf
- 5 <http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/freud1.pdf>
- 6 https://simondon.ocular-witness.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/05/question_concerning_technology.pdf
- 7 http://ieas.unideb.hu/admin/file_2908.pdf
- 8 <https://giuseppicapograssi.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/bauman-liquid-modernity.pdf>
- 9 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FOAF_\(ontology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FOAF_(ontology))

PERSONAL ARCHAEOLOGIES: A BRIEF MEDITATION

I challenge you to use your eyes. Really look at what you see, and decide what makes sense? Analysis the object.

As a design question, this is certainly important to address, but as a question of knowledge, of knowing, of really seeing what an object is, it is a task beyond excavation and almost un-'solvable'.

The challenge of seeing is always mediated, especially by books, museums and other spaces of historic learning. Whether online or off we frequently do not need to ask ourselves what is actually in front of our eyes. We're told; this is a maternity charm from around 6BCE, that is a child's toy, that painting is a metaphor for loyalty and religious devotion, he is the President, not a criminal.

Currently I am staring at a MacBook. I'm using it, but I'm not seeing it – I'm not staring into its design history, use history, built history. If I spent the time to see this, and analysis this, I could be swamped by information. Whether that is with child labour exploitations, the minutia of aesthetic decisions, or the sheer scale of the data stored within its polycarbonate unibody from the past 7 years.

The routes and circuits on which an object can be traced through and by are endless, and keeping them endless is significant to the continuation of a discourse on object histories; whether a painting, an object from a pre-colonial society or a webpage's code.

'Dislocation' of an item or object is exciting, it forces the eye to see the differences and similarities, points of friction and sheer random coincidences that litter the visual world. Challenge yourself to see, the google image-search function is dangerous.

END

A MOMENT TO THINK

The influence of technology is at the centre of our interaction with reality. The spread of new media in the digital age has brought a major shift in the ways we experience and understand time: past, present and future. If our memories are determinant to our ability to adapt to what it is to come, their configuration and activation mechanisms are crucial for our individual survival. Furthermore, they frame the parameters we collectively agree to set to build our politics, history and culture. A change in the established paradigms has shaken the ground on which society's values rely, a trend of which we are witnesses and unescapably involved.

It is now possible to deliver huge amounts of information at a speed never seen before, and its access has never been that easy. The Internet's omnipresence, the total collection of data and the digitization of everything keep feeding the continuous flux that overwhelms our capacity to pause. Numbness of our senses and brain, some voices might argue. Bypassing our rational thinking is not hard to achieve, and when stimulus occur at this level of intensity, our consciousness becomes prisoner of a higher system, impossible to escape. The fascination for our own creation has made us fall in a trap, leaving our experience of existence in the hands of an alienated being apparently out of control. It is technology's will and it has always been this way, techno-utopians would argue. There are not any chances left other than embrace it and evolve with it. Civilisation and history are products of technology's structuring powers, as well as the mental processes that enable us to create our images of that specific reality. If our time is determined, it seems that we are doomed to sit down and wait. This passive attitude towards the digital age has brought terrible consequences. When information flows out of democratic control, it becomes impossible to discern any stable truth at the roots of the public sphere. Reality appears to be contingent, our trust on moral values seems to destabilize, and our references in history lose their meaning leaving us in a status of perpetual vertigo, holding our breath waiting for the next thing to happen. Once these events seem to become inevitable, the surrender to our own passivity is getting closer. When information access is restricted, the public is withdrawn from debate, and every step towards knowledge is blocked, these symptoms should warn us about the existence of an agenda behind technology's strategies of implementation and, consequently, behind the changes of model. Therefore, we should not fall into techno-utopians naivety about technology's deterministic powers and give up.

Rethinking those elements that have hold our society throughout time is a necessary step of the process. Overcoming history and culture's control, while bringing clean perspectives may contribute to the defeat of the much confusion that technological euphoria is causing. Every step of the way should be critically analysed and commonly discussed to avoid further distortion or manipulation of information, because without a trustworthy basis, it is impossible to progress. History stands as a reliable source to challenge unclear intentions behind the glorification of tools created ultimately by humans, and to refuse the execution of imposed systems. Technology must work along the general interest to which its control belongs. Nothing should substitute our right to shape the environment in which our lives take place; there is not a motive for us to delegate that responsibility.

Bibliography

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Understanding Media, Marshall McLuhan 1964

Who Rules the World?, Noam Chomsky 2016

FRAGMENTS IMPLICATED

[...] bits of the mind's string too short to use, an indiscriminate and erratic assemblage with meaning only for its maker.

The impulse to write things down is a peculiarly compulsive one, inexplicable to those who do not share it, useful only accidentally, only secondarily in the way that any compulsion tries to justify itself.

-- Joan Didion, *On Keeping a Notebook*

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The ways we ascribe meaning to our lives, or history -- or both -- is largely down to how we interpret our responses to stimuli.

Brexit was a desperate cry for help from the poorest of British citizens in response to a stimulus which, for all its bus-shaped pomp and high falutin fanfare (to be clear, it was claimed to be worth £350 million), didn't quite seem too good to be true – or, on the other hand, it was a final stand from a withering band of nostalgic sentimentalists to regain a personal sense of sovereignty.

Or even, an optimistic punt from a mish-mash of types so diverse that we'll never be able to truly gather together enough fragments to establish a narrative thread behind this seismic shift in British history?

I am writing from a perspective which is wholly UK-centric, in a piece of writing destined for Europe. For this I apologise – Brexit is the closest stimulus my frazzled brain could muster to illustrate my point about stimuli, that it seemed the only plausible example to piece together in a short amount of time.

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My brain has tuned into lots of conversations recently concerning a new buzz phrase – the *Attention Economy*.

This concept concerns the fact that human attention is a finite resource – we only have a certain amount of mental capacity we can give to our waking hours, and by hook nor by crook this cannot be expanded. Publishers, advertisers, artists, educators, lovers, friends, comrades, influencers, all squabbling for our regard... we are faced with incessant decisions as to who (and what) we give our attention to, which in turn eats into the amount of time and focus we have left to give. Some of these forces are benign, others malignant. Mostly, our internal worlds are largely being eaten into by the mucky claws of the attention merchants of consumerism and our permissions have already been reprogrammed to let it happen.

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Here is a list of the stimuli that have slurped up my attention in the past hour, between 22.25-23.25, London, UK, 15th January:

Whatsapp (Instant Messenger)
Dry skin on my hands (body part)
WeChat (Instant Messenger)
BBC Radio 3 (Radio)
BBC Radio 6 Music (Radio)
Whatsapp (Instant Messenger)
Facebook (Social Media?)
My flatmate and friend Helen (human being)
Facebook Messenger (Instant Messenger)
Joan Didion (Book)
The bath (physical object/ spiritual energy)
Microsoft PowerPoint (not sure)

I'm not sure what my point here is. I want it to be less bleak than how it's coming across. There's perhaps too much flashing up on my late night mental showreel to be able to offer you any narrative clarity.

Others will have more strength and resolve – and as a result their histories will carry greater weight, be more convincing.

I apologise – I hope to be able to thread something together at a later date.

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ON META'S UGLINESS

From a certain angle,
I am not very different from you,
mortals.
In the end,
I appeared and then,
disappeared.

I was born from your rebirth,
crowd,
but never fully been really yours.
I was, in fact, Time's and Politics' and,
as you know,
they change as wind.

You never managed to overshadow my glow,
Coliseum.
Like birth and death,
I was your people's
first and last vision.
You were giving them illusions,
I woke them up,
I gave them life.

My sweat was gold to anyone,
my sight blind to possessions and power.
Gladiators and emperors,
slaves and children,
animals and sick people, for you all
I lived!
And you all,
many times,
loved me and begged me.

My beauty was a miracle,
People from every world dreamt
on my harmony
and from perishability I felt safe.
Constantine couldn't resist my splendour:
he built an arch to admire me
all the time

Time passed and
saw me this time.

It stopped my stream and left me still,
standing and watching
my fall

People became others
and others and memory
wasn't stacking.
I became shape
and symbol, and then
less shape
and another symbol and then
very little shape
and a worse symbol.

Too late, I met Politics.
He gave me life and took it back.
He created my symbols.
While, I thought,
I was talking to the people,
they only listened to him.

Time made me ugly,
turned me into debris,
made me small and miserable.
"I was, I was!" I shouted,
"I saw, I saw!" I warned.

The black man then
arrived.
He was the man of spectacle
of death and turned what was life
into funerary shapes.
Long time before, mine had abandoned me and
my debris hid
my past magnificence.

The man of the fake funeral
didn't only knock
my frame down,
he erased my memory,
killed my soul.

In you, now, I reborn.
In you Internet, I don't need to carry
my weight.

I can be
here and there and then
there and anywhere.
I am truly free now
to love anyone unconditionally
even more and
more.

Some turquoise silk banners are placed in the promontory, they are silent, tracing a blue corridor in the pale ocher of the sand.

O: you cannot tell if a ceremony has taken place there or if it still has to happen, right?

Texts curated by: Azzurra Pitruzzella

Date and Place: January 2018, London, UK; Milan, IT

List of texts:

Azzurra Pitruzzella, *A (Possible) History of Matter According to my Google Search*

Alice Woodhouse, *Personal Archaeologies: a Brief Meditation*

Luis Manuel Gómez Abajo, *A Moment to Think*

Ophelia Stimpson, *Fragments Implicated*

Azzurra Pitruzzella, *On Meta's Ugliness*

Nicola Iorini, -) ~ *

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