

**Inside the idea of  
Monument - Public Art Project**

**1) On Pyramids, Stadiums, and Authority.** The pyramid is a monument, probably one of the biggest examples of it. And monuments represent power in many ways. They are there as signs and reminders of the authority of the sovereign; they are authoritarian objects. The original pyramids were built to celebrate the divinity of the Pharaoh by a nameless group of architects and builders. Indeed ancient Egyptian art is often described as the product of a "chorus", not of individual artists. Even the geometric shape of the pyramid represents many summed into one; the hierarchic relationship between many and one. Furthermore, the all of western visual language still pivots around a geometric centre that dominates gaze, as it poses itself as the centre of focus of the field of seeing. Indeed perspective creates a hierarchy from the perimeter to the centre of the image ('perspective pyramid' it is called in Italian). Similarly, the photographic gaze places the subject at the centre of the image/frame. The object of gaze is the centre. The rest is less important and is relegated to the sides of the frame. There is a hierarchy here too.

Reciprocally, the stadium not just looks like, but acts as a reverted pyramid, where the mass watches the few, where the focus of perspective brings the eyes of many onto one. Also, it refers to a form of mass expression, of annihilation of individual in fanatic enthusiasm. Obliteration of the individual in front of someone/something allegedly more important.

In other words the stadium and the pyramid can represent two different expressions of mass versus individuality, of the controlled (and embraced) relation between the one active and the many passive. This is why I think that they both convey an idea of authority. And in this function they come in to play in my idea.

**Regarding the structure** I would like the material that I will use not to be a substitute for something, but the real thing. Probably is part of a "leaving the gallery" attitude, but I feel using real seats on real terraces would generate a much stronger image. Moreover, keeping this aesthetic would also provide the formal character I want without diverting the attention from the meaning of the elements at play. Also I find the aspect of modern plastic shapes and colours very good for what I want to present. It is at once captivating and standard, like a supermarket aesthetic.

I also think that the contrast between the archetypal shape of the pyramid and the modern stadium seats will enhance the impression of absurdity. It will underline two kinds of mass behaviours imploded in one single element.

## 2) Show and Public

This idea pivots around the contradiction of watching a show and being shown at the same time, being exposed. Therefore, turning the public into the spectacle. I also think of something like a public without show or a public ready to be directed towards any spectacle. As if the show were not gathering the public, but the public pre-existed the show and were in need of one.

**Issues on participation and Intervention** A couple of years ago I came across the work of an artist (Gorska Makuga) who had previously been a curator and was now making art works by organising and showing other people's work in galleries or in portable furniture-like displays. I could not help thinking: the tyranny of the curator! But deeply I felt that the point was rather the tremendous distance between this and the work with people done a few decades ago (I was mainly thinking of V. Acconci). The distance between the intention of unlocking social rules by means of challenging personal boundaries and the present flattening of individualities into material for the work.

This is the point I want to work on. I want to push this alienation, this annihilation to its extreme. I would like to build something that will make us look so characterless and obedient that at least someone will feel uncomfortable being constricted in such a stupid position. This is also why I try to create an absurd situation that is stuck in a deadlock. What could be more absurd than being the King of the Spectators?

I also must say that most of my thoughts come from what I have seen happening in my country (Italy) where lately a happy sleep has proven the most efficient tool for domination. This is what I want to say to the art world and to a broader public. I want to warn: *let us not be fooled, we are fools.*

There is also a more personal reason for my interest in an *intervention*: I feel that the areas specifically devoted to art have become as such somewhat artificial, laboratory environments that do not belong to reality any longer. Contained areas where art can be harmless. Something we could easily do without.

With that comes also a personal need to dive into action in the tangle of organising, obtaining permissions, finding suppliers, manage budgets, all things that I often find as creative as working alone in the studio. After years of introspective work, dealing with people has become a much more interesting challenge.

**Double role of public** If I expect a specific reaction, this would not be which question can arise in the public regarding art, but a question about the public itself, about the individuals' position among others, and in society.

I would start by making a distinction between the experience of those who seat and the experience of those who watch (two groups that exist separated only on a logical level).

The intervention here is something very physical. I am creating a spatial obstacle in the flow of everyday life, I hope it will act as an interruption that will slow down and stop people. A time interruption in an area of transition that makes us spectators of the flux (this is also why I was thinking of the hall of a train station for the setting).

But spectators of which show? After inverting the focus of the stadium tribunes, the apparent nothing to watch can make the spectator position completely pointless. It might be unbearable to seat without a show to watch, or one can realise that there is much more to see. Therefore taking a moment to look around and think about the surroundings (from the architecture, to the people, to the way they interact, to the design and destination of the public areas). Or may be one will just like to seat high up in a controlling royal position, also implementing the work.

Which kind of people would stop is also an open question of the work; and reciprocally what the passers-by, on-lookers, and ultimately art-visitors would see. I personally think of an ironic monument to visual aspect of power. But it could be many other things according to participation and interpretation. Indeed those who seat are "participants", provided they are aware of being inside an artistic frame, but at the same time they act as material. They are part of the image that the second public watches. They might feel exposed, either in a vulnerable way or in an exhibitionist way. Or they might not care at all, but still they would provide the fuel for the work to function. Moreover, in many cities I have seen those who seats on monuments steps are often the periphery of society: tourists, immigrants, the homeless; all somehow on the verge of emargination. Hence, far from a beautiful monument, this could appear as mound of desperation with drunkards, drug users, garbage, and loneliness. So, some might only see a monument to social exclusion, or just find one more excuse to scream that the city needs "cleaning up". It would anyway act as a stage that frames what might arise from reality. If no one dares or cares seating, the work would still not fail, it would convey a powerful image of social hierarchy to be filled, and obeyed.

### **3) On the subtitle *Public Art***

In this case public art does not necessarily mean common, open to everyone, or for everyone to see. It is not simply opposite to private art, only by being in a public space. Indeed, I believe that since the advent of mass communication, the square and street have lost most of their public quality and tend to be spaces of indifference. Areas in between, to be crossed while going from A to B. On the other hand, what we are all looking at as a new sort of common arena is generated by TV, papers and the web (all of which are not really public since their communication is mono-directional).

So this is public art as in art 'about the public'. An art piece that will hopefully bring some awareness on the non-public aspect of 'public space'.

Since now such space has been abandoned, and it is not controlled as it used to be, since attention is somewhere else, it could be reclaimed and reinvented<sup>1</sup>.

In times of democracy being considered a dream or a dinosaur of the 20th century, I am trying to make a provocative monument/statement to the mono-directional form of communication we experience. I am not hoping to change the world, only to present my impression on how we behave lately.

I also know that these ideas are not incredibly new. But today we have fallen so far behind, that most experience and experiment toward a real democratisation of society have been erased. I feel we have been left in a vacuum, where those values are forgotten. Now some discussion might be starting again, so does the work, following the same steps of 30-40 years ago.

#### **4) The subject matter**

Irony, impossibility and absurdity applied to the relation between oneself and society, between individuals, and among groups are my real interest. And so is the failure that follows an impossible or absurd attempt of forced implementation.

In other words, the public or political element of the work is one level of reading it. But it also functions as the subject matter for my fascination with the vicious circle of impossibility and failure. I believe that the inversion on which the work is based is the stalling moment of a tension that cannot be solved into a synthesis, that falls back on to its previous opposites. I see this kind of project as asking a question after having set absurd parameters. I also believe that the answer is framed, bound to be impossible. Or better it remains paralysed because it is trying to join two negative elements and now cannot move forward or backward, it is stuck. Of course the work is open to participation and interpretations can be different, but I believe they will always retain this character.

This tinge of absurdity or nonsense, which is a common character to what I have done in the last couple of years, makes me remember the scepticism of Montaigne, particularly an anecdotal quote: "even on the highest throne of the world we are still seating on our ass" (sic).

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<sup>1</sup> For instance the fact that the intention of entering the off limit area (in Genova where was taking place the G8 summit and that sparked the 3 days riot in 2001) was described as a *symbolic action* shows how the perception of real space to control has shifted.