**Aesthetics and Participation. Critical Perspectives on Art, Politics and Spectatorship**

Claire Bishop published Artificial Hells in 2011, one of contemporary art criticism's most significant and controversial texts, dedicated, as its subtitle states, to participatory art and the politics of spectatorship. In that essay Bishop intercepted and defined the main orientation of the art of the last two decades - a "participatory" art, in fact, characterised by a renewed attention to the social dimension and the relationship between the aesthetic dimension and the political project; she also had the merit of outlining the terms of a debate that in previous years had involved, among others, Nicolas Bourriaud, Grant Kester, Jacques Rancière and Stewart Martin, who were committed to promoting or criticising relational, dialogical and collaborative artistic practices. More than a decade later, however, the “social turn” point of participatory art does not seem to have exhausted its drive. Indeed, "participation" - perhaps even more than "interactivity" and "immersiveness" - has become a key term in the artistic and curatorial lexicon, evoking a heterogeneous field of practices and projects programmatically directed against the passivity of the spectatorial experience, "disinterested" contemplation, the claimed autonomy of art and its institutionalised spaces and, more generally, the modes of production and consumption of advanced capitalism. In the course of the 20th century, on the other hand, the theme of participation and of a politics of spectatorship crossed the reflections of many philosophers, artists and intellectuals, often in concomitance with historical moments marked by profound transformations of social and political order and the need for a recognition of the state of "crisis of culture": think of Benjamin's theses on technical reproducibility and shock, Adorno's and Horkheimer's critiques of the culture industry, and Debord's theses on the 'society of the spectacle', to name but a few of the most significant examples. In recent years, thanks to a vibrant and fruitful international debate, the notion of participation has become more complex and multifaceted, along with the concepts of dialogue, relation, collaboration, context and intersubjectivity. From the point of view of Bishop, and partly Hal Foster – two of the critics who extensively dealt, and continue to deal, with these issues – participation, dialogue and collaboration are not goals in themselves, but only to the extent that they are able to investigate and bring out the complexity of questions that involve art. This entails the necessity to rethink the role of the spectator and the opportunity to act and intervene on the work of art, the issues connected with the formation ofan artistic community (on what terms, and with what outcomes, these communities exist), the status of the artwork and its placement in the social context.

The participatory model, on the other hand, is not limited to the artistic and curatorial field. Political theory, urban studies, architecture and urban planning, but also practical experiences of self-organization and social involvementaiming at the reappropriation and the radical revision of urban spaces, rely on participation with increasing urgency. Alongside with this model of participation “from below” – which includes different and sometimes conflicting realities, from the occupations of cultural venues and living areas to the associations defending the ideology of urban decorum – is to be found a different, institutional offer of participation, which tries to intercept and neutralize political demandsand conflicts that necessarily characterize participatory practices.

As suggested by the title, this issue of “Pólemos. Materiali di filosofia e critica sociale” aims at a theoretical and historical overview on the main themes related to participation, in orderto identify a constellation of terms and concept useful to define its status and relevance, in the aesthetic, artistic and political fields.

Possible topics of contribution include:

* Analysis on the participatory model, in connection with some theoretical key issues of aesthetics, like disinterestedness, contemplation and critical distance, directly linked with aesthetic judgement;
* The relation between participatory and public art and the museum, and in general with artistic and cultural institutions;
* Differences and similarities between strictly participatory, collaborative and dialogical practices and their reinterpretation in terms of interactivity and immersivity;
* The relation between artist and spectator as unfolded in the participatory model, characterized on the one hand by the waiver or the transfer of authorship and, on the other, by the dialectic between intervention and attentional trajectories of the single spectator and a collective *agency*, alongside with the formation of an artistic community and the (possible) collective processing of meaning;
* Analysis on the status of the (participatory) artwork, with a special focus on the rielaboration of the concepts of autonomy and aesthetic quality, the form/content dialectic and the relation between visuality and temporality;
* The relevance of the concept of participation in political theory and contemporary urban studies.

**Submission Guidelines**:

Articles should not exceed 40.000 typewritten characters, including spaces. Authors must include an English abstract (1.000 characters). Manuscripts should be submitted by the on-line submission form by March 15th, 2022 (.doc, .docx or .odt are accepted). Please place papers and abstracts together in one document and ensure that it is suitable for anonymous review. Papers directly connected to the theme are especially encouraged, but also papers on other topics, which are philosophically connected to it, will be considered for publication. Contributions in Italian, English, French, German and Spanish are accepted.