

PROFILE: maurizio nannucci and zona, florence

Editor's Note: The Editor of *Umbrella* had the privilege of interviewing Maurizio Nannucci of Florence, Italy in May in Toronto during the conference on International Exposure for Canadian Artists. *Umbrella* has visited not only Zona, the artists' space in Florence, but also the archive, the phenomenal collection of books, magazines and ephemera in his home and studio in Florence, Italy. The interview was done in Italian and translated by *Umbrella*.

When did your Archive begin?

In the 1960s, I was doing typewriter poetry, and then someone told me that it was concrete poetry, and I didn't even know it. I was published in Emmett Williams' *Anthology* published by Something Else Press, and at that moment, a lot of material was being distributed by a large network, mail art, where we sent out work and it never returned, but was given as a gift or exchanged. I realized that all this material and documentation linked to concrete and visual poetry and to Fluxus and music was not being regarded with due recognition. People created it, received it and recognized it, and then abandoned it. At that moment, I realized there was a possibility of gathering it all together. And it was easily found until the end of the 60s in Europe. In a couple of years, however, it became rare, these small editions. Thus was born the desire to collect this material that other persons had not collected. The others who had collected the avant-garde, including Dadaism, Futurism, etc. all had to spend a great deal of money.

Was there a network in Italy at this time for collecting these things?

Yes. A few people, e.g. Mario Diacono understood this. But other artists and art workers had participated in the debate about this situation but had no intention of retaining these documents for posterity. Spatola, for example, collected his own correspondence for his own works and purposes, but had not enlarged it into a general archive.

How did you gather in this collection. Did you pay for it, did you exchange?

At the beginning of concrete poetry, it arrived as an exchange. Afterwards, much later, I started looking at the lacunae in my collection, e.g. the Solt *Anthology of Concrete Poetry*, so I contacted Mary Ellen Solt to get one; or Dick Higgins or Robert Filliou, a network that really did not have a precise definition. Then it was called Concrete Poetry, Fluxus and Intermedia. From the middle of the 1960s, I had connections with Ben Vautier, Jackson MacLow, Ray Johnson, James Lee Byars, a very wide network which didn't have a defined direction which came forth afterwards as far as a grouping.

I see that it was not just a private archive.

When I was a boy, I was so happy to say I never made a stamp collection, and when I grew up, I became very involved in stamps, but stamps made by artists. I just don't like the spirit of collecting for collecting's sake. I looked at all the things I had and realized how valuable they are in one place, instead of being dispersed to preserve them, which is a value of recognition of phenomena which are living works of art of today, continuing into artists' books, and sound media, for the same motives. In Italy at the end of the 60s there was critical recognition for

these materials such as that of Germano Celant, Daniele Palazzoli who tried to find critical and historical places for this material. Then they became disinterested because perhaps their strategy was very reductive with respect to their ambitions. With Celant, who has a magnificent archive, his interests can be exchanged for others due to information.

When did Zona begin?

Zona, as an idea, was easy to conceive, because in Italy there did not exist any alternative spaces except those which were publicly financed. Many artists in the 60s who found new ways of expressing themselves through new media vs. traditional means with different sensibilities, different ambitions found it difficult because audiences were very limited due to indifference. Zona was born with these presuppositions by a group of artists residing in Florence in which one can live well, but a city which is not very generous for contemporary art although the city produces many interesting things in radical motives of visual arts, music (Fluxus, computer music), with artists such as Paolo Masi, Giuseppe Chiari, Albert Mayr, Luciano Bartolini, Massimo Nannucci, Gianni Pettena, and myself founded Zona to be a place where these new movements could be seen and heard, in a city which had largely ignored them for years. We chose a small place, \$2000 a year budget, with 250 various events which we have put on. It has been discreet, and as a final destination, all activity centers around the collection of material, which I have mediated for certain reasons. One of the first and most stimulating events which centered on the accumulation of material was the *Small Press Scene*, one of the first exhibitions, with 300 titles of magazines from 1960 produced and distributed by artists, with self-distribution by the producers, the artists, small bookshops and a few collectors. This occurred in 1975. We continued to collect material after the exhibition. Now we have thousands of titles of magazines and yet not all the runs are complete. We exchange material for other materials, but sometimes because of economic reasons, we haven't been able to do everything. We have agreements with public institutions, to start an archive, but because of legal and political reasons, interest has changed. It is easy to use our own efforts, will and energy to do this archive ourselves!

Do you have relations with other centers?

In Italy, there are similar places, but mostly to forward the cause of artists who participate in the effort, while at Zona, we have a centripetal instrument which attracts external efforts and presents them in Florence. All of us are independent artists who give of ourselves to produce the space and the archive at Zona. From time to time we call ourselves the group of work, an agile structure.

In the 1970s, I always tried to involve Zona with other activities of mine, even though they were at my personal initiative, in order to give more energy to Zona, to make it better known. The invitation to do a book show was directed to me, but since I was part of Zona, I tried to involve them too by using part of the Zona archive.

Who uses the Archive?

The Archive has practical problems. The material is a

collection. For example, the small press is in alphabetical order and there is a catalog. The bookworks do not have a complete catalog, but there is a way of finding books dealing with the long production of some artists. Audio Works are all cataloged: 200 disks, 200 cassettes, along with the first records of Art by Telephone, the first records of Giant by Andy Warhol, then there is Sound Poetry and Artists' Audio Works.

If anyone reads this interview and wants to send you anything, what can they do?

Well, for sound works, for artists' books, for magazines, the space is there for your new titles, but we cannot send you anything in return. The material will be secure and will not be dispersed, and there is hope that we can have a public space that is more available, which is our intention. Zona is open three times a week, yet some months we are closed, because we are travelling with new work, research, etc. If Zona is created by active artists, then one must understand this.

What do you think of this technological revolution which we are undergoing, which will perhaps erase the print media?

Personally, I must always be open to this situation which will probably be improved. However, for artists there are always problematic situations with this new technology. The computer doesn't have such a great product. Perhaps it will improve, like new video, which was documentation of performance but really was not video art. We need more time to enlarge our vistas with the new technology. I think that soon we will have proposals by artists with "technological art" with different trends from painting, which is now undergoing a transitional period. There will be ties with people who have maintained an analytical thrust via these changes, who have maintained an historical perspective.

Zona is open for Florentines only, or for foreign artists too. We have a very flexible program. We have never fixed our plans. If someone comes and lets us know a week ahead of time that he or she is coming, then we will find a space for them to realize their work or art or discussion. To differentiate Zona from the galleries, an idea in which there is synthesis, symbiotic relation, to communicate, we began to do works which involved the neighborhood: who we are, what we do, paying homage to the neighborhood. Then it was all dedicated to what was happening outside of Florence, since Florentine artists wanted to know people from other places, but not to do an "international" geography. For us, "international" means "provincial".

What is the future for Zona?

We had planned to stay open only 2 years, and now after 8 years we are the only alternative space in Florence. We think we will continue, and now more young artists want to join and create a situation for these younger artists. We want to do this as long as we have this energy. If this energy changes at all, then Zona can end, but right now we have the desire and the energy to continue as an archive, which is the final goal.

What are your relations with other archives?

Years ago, we asked the National Library of Florence to take over the Archive, keeping it intact with a catalog, and

they said no, since there are problems with classification, since we consider a piece of paper which is the only documentation of an event as important as a 250-page catalog. To them, this was incomprehensible; it is weight that is important, not quality.

With Umbrella, Hans Sohm, Jean Brown and the Sackners, we have very good relations, but also with little collectors, those who do not have the madness of collecting, but who do it quietly, who have graphic collections, small works by artists. For example, there are book collectors in Italy of ancient books, but there are also collectors of contemporary artists' books who are very few, but they collect modest artists and modest works of art.

Zona began in 1974 in a working class neighborhood of San Nicolo in Florence as a nonprofit art space and organization, run by a group of local artists. The purpose was to give information and to exhibit, serving as an international meeting point within the world of the nonprofit space. With more than 250 shows, performances, installations, lectures and concerts in the past 8 years, Zona has opened up new levels of discussions and activity. Not only the Small Press Scene in 1975, but also *Zona Suono e Ambiente*, held in 1977 and curated by Albert Mayr, based on information collected from all over the world, related to experiences dealing with sound and space, including concerts and musical performances given by Richard Heyman, Alvin Lucier, Giancarlo Cardini, Cornelius Cardew, etc.

Parola e Suono (1979-1980), an exhibition specifically dedicated to presenting works of sound poetry and artists' audioworks, is, like many other works in progress events at Zona, still open to future contributions. Participants have been Sten Hanson, Henri Chopin, Maurizio Nannucci, Robert Lax, Bernard Heidsieck, Ulises Carrion, Adriano Spatola and Dick Higgins.

Zona radio belongs within this same field of investigation. In cooperation with the Florentine radio station Controradio, a series of radio transmissions were broadcast over a three-month period with tapes and audio-materials by Joseph Beuys, Robert Lax, Vito Acconci, John Giorno, Keith Sonnier, Dieter Roth, Lawrence Weiner, Jackson Mac Low, Robert Filliou, Albert Mayr, Ben Vautier, Jack Goldstein and Maurizio Nannucci. Rather than simply transmitting these audioworks, an attempt was made to explore a method of editing which, without falsifying the sense of the work, would indicate a certain compositional approach that had been especially adapted to the medium of the radio. Zona radio also participated in 1982 at the festival, *Ars Electronica*, in Linz, Austria.

International themes have included an exhibition on Iceland in 1977 with films, books, documents and work by 25 artists. There is also a kind of "hotline" between Zona and Canada with connections with General Idea, Glenn Lewis, Ian Murray, Bill Vazan, Vincent Trasov through documents and magazines, and information between artists' spaces such as Art Metropole, Western Front, A Space and many others.

Zona Genève (1982) recognized the activity of a group of young artists from Geneva, who participated in the journal

young artists from Geneva, who participated in the journal *Furor*. Included were contacts with Ecart, Gaetan and the Center of Contemporary Art. *Australia* was a recent exhibition of work by artists in Australia, and we have recently had a show of video productions made in Berlin.

Zona's Archives have been recognized throughout the world as a rich collection of publications from the small press, artists' books (over 2,500 examples), audioart including records and cassettes, soundpoetry with over 1000 listening hours, and the collection of concrete and visual poetry made in collaboration with the archives Exempla. For more information, write to Zona, Via S. Nicolò 119r, 50125 Florence, Italy.



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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Museo Vostell in Malpartida de Caceres, Spain celebrated DACOM, Dia de Arte Contemporaneo Malpartida, with an exhibition of Polish artists of the avantgarde, as well as a lecture on Salvador Dali by Wieland Schmied; performances and installations by many others, including Vostell.

■ Parliament defeated a bill that would have allowed the British Museum to return the ancient Elgin Marbles to Greece, 167 years after they were removed.

■ The American Center in Paris and its Center for Media Art presented a discussion with Carole Brandenburg of WNET-TV Lab on Chapnel 13 in New York on 14 November. In addition, they had a retrospective of Ed Emshiller his films and his video from 21 - 23 November.

■ Amidst all the kinds of art given to the United Nations in New York, the latest is a huge painting depicting, among other things, two lurking condors, a scorpion and a pussycat. Everyone at the UN has become an instant art critic. The painting by Alejandro Obregon entitled *Sunrise in the Andes* was painted in brilliant oranges, yellows, greens and blues, hitting each delegate directly in the eye as they enter the main lounge and bar.

■ More than 40 of Aleksandr Kalugin's most recent works have found their way to Albuquerque, New Mexico, which he has never seen for an exhibit entitled *Dreams of New Mexico and Russia*. Some of the paintings draw on Russian folk tales and religious imagery or on surrealistic visionsof life in the mental hospital.

The artist, who picked upon New Mexico as a place, was arrested on a Moscow street in August 1982 for malicious hooliganism and resisting arrest. He was diagoned at the Ferbsky Institute of Psychiatry in Moscow as having "sluggish schizophrenia." In February, Kalugin was confined indefinitely to Psychiatric Hospital no. 5, about 30 miles outside Moscow. The show is to draw attention of the West to his case.

■ Jean-Louis Froment, director of the Centre d'Art Plastiques Contemporain in Bordeaux, France, will be serving as curator along with Lynda Forsha, La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art curator, and Selma Holo, director of the Fisher Gallery of USC in an exhibition called *French Spirit Today*. Drawings and proposals for installations will be on view at USC in March and April, 1984, and larger paintings, installations and photographs at La Jolla from June to July. In return, Froment is planning to import a show of works by 12 California sculptors, including Chuck Arnoldi, Jud Fine, Michael Todd and DeWain Valentine.

■ Greece has begun work to save the Parthenon from damage by corrosion, pollution, earthquakes and the hands and feet of visitors. The program calls for the removal of iron and steel components from all accessible places and their replacement by titanium alloys.

■ The work of Ivan Wyschnegradsky (1893-1979) was at Gelbe Musik in Berlin in September and October, the music gallery and shop in Berlin.