Music in Interaction with Other Arts: Florence in the 1960s and the Experience of Gruppo 70*

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'The division of the arts is in defense of a nobility [...]. I am convinced that making music is tantamount to continually affirming, by implication, the impossibility of a musical specificity'.[1]

1. INTRODUCTION

The 1960s represented a rich and complex period in Florentine musical and cultural life, in which the encounter and intersection of various arts characterized and animated important realities and initiatives, such as the Vita Musicale Contemporanea association (1960–1967), the *Arte e Comunicazione* conference (1963) and the *Arte e Tecnologia* conference (1964).[2] The action of Gruppo 70 is of particular interest in this context. Officially established in the city, in May 1963, it was the group around which disparate artistic figures and forces coalesced in a common research and action for an aesthetic and political-cultural order.[3]

The experience of the Gruppo 70 and its members, observed in connection to music, and its inherently interdisciplinary nature, or rather its 'interartisticità',[4] will be the topic of this article. The breadth of such a phenomenon requires the investigation of an equally wide range of historical documentation and source material. An analysis of the archival materials will be confronted with the statements of witnesses and protagonists whom I interviewed, and a plurality of disciplinary approaches. From this perspective, the various documentary and testimonial

voices must be compared, intersected, combined like pieces of a puzzle, or better, as parts of a collage whose features and colors can fully result only through their interaction. Moreover, to adequately address this period, it is necessary to place the events within the artistic and cultural context that emerged some fifteen years prior, in the immediate postwar period. During that time, certain foundations were laid that contributed to determining them, and thus enable today's observers and historians to better grasp the characteristics of the activities being investigated.

Florentine intellectual and artistic life in the aftermath of World War II was characterized by a complex climate: in the 1950s and 1960s it caused several artists (among them Sylvano Bussotti in the second half of the 1950s and Lamberto Pignotti in 1968) to leave the town or, even if they still lived there, to relocate their activities elsewhere. Paradoxically, however, this sort of diaspora, at least in its initial stages, rather than simply impoverishing the city's cultural fabric, created some of the favorable conditions for the extraordinary events of 1963 and 1964 on which we shall dwell. However, the fact that international forces and synergies that might not otherwise have met converged on Florence was not enough to interrupt a process that Pignotti, in the early 2000s, mercilessly referred to as a form of cultural squandering.[5]

2. ASPECTS OF CULTURAL LIFE IN FLORENCE IN THE 1950s

2.1. The *Frank Lloyd Wright* exhibition (1951) and its reception on Adriano Lualdi's journal *Piazza delle Belle Arti*

Although it doesn't directly concern music, I have selected the *Frank Lloyd Wright: Sixty Years of Living Architecture* exhibition, staged at Palazzo Strozzi in 1951, as the starting point for my considerations. This was a prominent cultural event of the early 1950s, especially due to the impulse of the art historian and critic Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti of the University of Pisa. Its considerable size and reverberation made a fundamental impact on the recognition of Wright's work in Europe. The exhibition was made possible through an extraordinary organizational effort by the city administration with the Mayor of Florence, Mario Fabiani, at the forefront.[6] Nonetheless, from the preparations the local press made evident that the exhibition was met with coldness due to idiosyncrasies between city leadership, the academics included, and the more traditionalist positions of intellectuals and critics, such as Roberto Papini and Piero Bargellini. The municipal elections on 27–28 May, practically coinciding with the inauguration (initially scheduled for 26 May, then postponed to 24 June), made things even more difficult. The result

marked the defeat of the alliance between the Communist and Socialist Parties, which supported the outgoing Mayor. The winner came from the coalition led by the Christian Democrats. The following July, Giorgio La Pira became Mayor, and he nominated Bargellini as Deputy Mayor for Fine Arts and Education (Bargellini himself would become mayor 15 years later, in 1966). In the midst of such a complex situation, the already controversial and scarcely attended exhibition, was forced to close earlier than expected; although an attempt was made to remount it in Milan, it eventually proved to be impossible.

Among the various journals that expressed doubts, if not hostility, toward the initiative, it is worth mentioning *Piazza delle Belle Arti. Rassegna dell'Accademia Nazionale "Luigi Cherubini" di Lettere, Musica e Arti figurative*. The journal was started in 1950, by Adriano Lualdi, Director of the Cherubini Conservatory from 1947 to 1956, and was an expression of the "Luigi Cherubini" Academy, for which Lualdi himself, in the two years prior, had requested and obtained a new statutory definition that opened the doors not only to musicians but also to academics from literature and the visual arts.[7]

Despite the apparent ideals of openness given by the interdisciplinary nature of the institution, the journal reflected the conservative positions of its promoter and editor. On the subject of Wright's exhibition it manifested its incontrovertible orientation through the pen of Armando Venè (1887–1952), Superintendent of the Monuments of Arezzo, Florence and Pistoia since 1943, having held similar positions in various Italian locations since 1923. Venè, after rather venomously pointing out that he also appreciated Wright because 'it pleases that one has the courage not to deny the authorship of one's creations even if they do not do honor today, and in Wright's exhibition there were several',[8] launched into the following externalization:

> For me if there was a mistake, it was that of choosing Florence for the presentation of this artist or rather for the presentation of the artist's complete work. Perhaps Milan or Turin would have been more suitable venues and the controversy would certainly have been less heated and vibrant, as since as, truly, not all opinions were in agreement in their judgment and not only in the official academic world that prudently and perhaps not inappropriately kept away even from the inauguration, but among the young people themselves who it was to be presumed, would have been better able to understand the work, if not the artist. [...] Youth who could not forget how exactly Wright had lent himself to the work of denigrating our Art.[9]

The article thus concludes with a tirade about a supposed 'made in U.S.A.' fad that would lead one to overlook that,

there are also people here at home who study, ponder, work and create new and sometimes beautiful architecture, without putting on too many airs and without denying a past that is and has been of glory and light not only for us! But perhaps it is easy to deny history to those peoples who still have no history or at least still have it too polished and scrupulous.[10]

Two aspects should be emphasized in the passages quoted here. The first is how, despite the undoubted institutional authority of its author, the article can be considered as the voice of extreme provincialism that not only has the traits of chauvinism, but also speaks in an anti-American vein that can perhaps be interpreted as remnant of fascist dictatorship, if not of the so called 'Repubblica di Salò'. The second is the appearance of false naiveté on the part of those who, on the one hand, claim that in Turin or Milan the polemics would perhaps have been 'less heated and vibrant', and on the other clearly corroborate them with their own words and arguments.

2.2. Arts and music between conservatism and renewal

Having covered this complex affair, documented in the pages of *Piazza delle Belle Arti,* it is now apparent how difficult and heatedly polemical the cultural climate was that characterized the city since the end of the war. Postwar Florence proved to be fertile ground for conservative, when not openly reactionary tendencies, which in the twenty years of Fascism had been much more nuanced or even silent.[11] A decision in the musical world that was eloquent of the spread of a conservative climate was when the orchestra members of the Teatro Comunale, with the support of the city's critics, chose to boycott the March 1947 performance of Riccardo Nielsen's 'too modern' *Musica per archi* (the work ended up being performed anyway the following year, on 11 March 1948, with Franco Capuana as the conductor). These kinds of positions seem to derive advantage and strength, as well as legitimacy, also from the presence of a controversial figure, one who is aesthetically nostalgic and politically compromised with the fascist regime, but nevertheless charismatic and, in his own way, as authoritative as Lualdi, capable of exerting a form of direct and indirect influence on other musical institutions in the city, and on the voices and positions of music critics, who could feel strengthened by him, at least from a moral point of view.[12]

Nonetheless, the specific intervention of *Piazza delle Belle Arti* I have recalled is eloquent not only of the aversion in the city, widespread in some circles, toward innovations in contemporary art, and of its ability to cast a shadow on cultural

life, but also of a kind of 'mythology of elsewhere' that – attained its foundation among those who recognized themselves in the perspectives of Lualdi's journal – characterized the city in general. If Florence was, or was believed to be, a city historically anchored in traditional artistic forms, this would not be the case for other Italian cities seen as more available and open to contemporaneity; for example, Milan or Turin, as mentioned in the magazine, or even Rome for that matter.

The negative attitude we have observed was very active and noisy: it repeatedly leveraged a form of unjustified victimhood against a supposed general trend crushing its supporters, and it also amplified its aggressive force through the press. Not least, however, in a city like Florence, it also pandered to and fed a widespread feeling of the townspeople that was linked to the city's image and history as the cradle of the art of Giotto, Leonardo, Brunelleschi, Vasari and the Renaissance, and thus as the home of a sort of ideal artistic 'classicism'.

This tendency coexisted, however, with another that sought an openness towards artistic innovation and research. It may have been animated by a sense of rejection of the situation just mentioned and the climate it determined, but it may also have been fueled by a form of direct reference to the city's history, especially as the seat of the avant-garde that developed in the first half of the century through the journals and intellectual cenacles in venues such as the Giubbe Rosse, Rivoire, Paskowski, and San Marco Cafés.[13] In both cases it too – and this time not without reason – tends to perceive itself as a minority in a difficult, possibly fertile but overall inherently hostile context for change and innovation.

We can ascribe the discovery and exploration of the twelve-tone technique to the resistance and direct opposition to a conservative climate. Six musicians linked to the teaching of Luigi Dallapiccola were united in this effort: Arrigo Benvenuti, Alvaro Company, Bruno Bartolozzi, Carlo Prosperi, Reginald Smith-Brindle and a young Silvano Bussotti gave life to the *Schola fiorentina* (c. 1954–1957), an informal association intended as an opportunity and space for renewal and resistance to the city's closure.[14]

The desire to establish continuity with the avant-garde movements of the first half of the century, on the other hand, manifested itself both through the creation of magazines such as *Chimera* (1954) and *Quartiere* (1958; Pignotti also contributed to it), and in a nucleus of artists from various backgrounds who shared the need and the demands for renewal, and the search for a vital relationship between art and society with a markedly interdisciplinary perspective. It placed itself as openly contiguous with the early twentieth-century Florentine avant-garde, adopting one of the famous cafés, the Bar Gran Caffè San Marco, as its meeting place. It was precisely from this experience that Gruppo 70 was established in 1963.[15]

Moreover, in the meantime, this city so quarrelsome, practically in the aftermath of Wright's exhibition in 1953, had hosted in a small private Contemporary Art Gallery the exhibition *Scatole e Costruzioni Contemplative* with works by Robert Rauschenberg. The event had resounding, dramatic, and at the same time fruitful implications: following the rejection by the local press, Rauschenberg destroyed the exhibited works by throwing them into the Arno and made this very failure a turning point.[16]

The artists who identified themselves with these innovative trends shared the need to build a group, a community. The six members of the *Schola fiorentina* saw themselves as the new 'carbonari', underground operators, to borrow Bussotti's ironic expression in 1957, harboring 'something as dangerous as the "twelve-tone series"!'.[17] The dodecaphonic apprentices – not their point of reference Dallapiccola, who observed them with detached irony and at the same time human concern – underestimated that what in their eyes appeared as the quintessence of modernity was an acquired and even outdated output, and that the insistence on dodecaphony, instead of giving them an aura of openness and contemporaneity, on the contrary determined a provincial and outdated image. Not surprisingly, the experience was very short and, as a 'formal' group, the *Schola fiorentina* had already exhausted its action around 1957.[18] Bussotti was the first to move away from it and go his own way in Europe. Paradoxically, as we shall see, a few years later this would bring him back to animate Florentine cultural and musical life again, having become forever 'Sylvano',[19] with truly innovative and avant-garde musical and artistic proposals that were different from those of his youth.

2.3. The young Silvano Bussotti

The figure of Bussotti is emblematic of a peculiar artistic atmosphere that saw the intersection of the arts as its focal point.[20] Indeed, Bussotti (1931–2021) grew up in a very stimulating family context: his father – who worked in the Palazzo Vecchio and, as a second job, at the Teatro Comunale – took him as much to attend operas and concerts in the city theater as he did to visit, thanks to restricted staff access, the Uffizi Gallery, while his maternal uncle, Tono Zancanaro, was a renowned painter. From childhood and boyhood, he himself not only juggled music and drawing, but constructed his own scores by juxtaposing the notational element on staves with the graphic-visual element.[21] The interdisciplinary nature of his art and of his own personal aptitude drew special impetus from his frequentation of the Torrione Farnese in Castell'Arquato, where around the poet and intellectual Aldo Braibanti gathered a community of artists from various backgrounds, including Renzo Bussotti, Silvano's older brother and a promising painter.[22] From it Bussotti

received new insights that led him to broaden his action to cinema: his first public experiences in this sphere date precisely from the first half of the 1950s. We have news of this from a letter from Bussotti to his fraternal friend, and fellow member of the *Schola fiorentina*, Arrigo Benvenuti: from Venice, on 21 September 1955, Bussotti wrote to him that he had attended the 'First viewing for the critics of the short film by Aldo and myself'.[23]

During the 1950s, Bussotti produced staged events (including for puppet theater) in which he was engaged not only as a performer and musician, but also as the costume and set designer, in a conception of aesthetic action that crossed the boundaries between the arts without determining their form of intermingling.[24] It is possible to grasp in this phase of Bussotti's activity some elements that would later find full development at the end of the decade, with the famous Darmstadt *exploit* of his *Piece de chair – Piano pieces for David Tudor* and their score based not on the juxtaposition or even the mutual recall of musical notation and graphic sign – as in the works produced mostly up to then – but on an organic convergence of graphic sign and notation (in this case, it seems perhaps appropriate to speak of shreds of notation): their whole becomes a score, a musical text, aimed at a performance that transcends the sound component and openly involves gesture and physical action.[25]

3. MUSIC AND THE ARTS IN GRUPPO 70, BETWEEN ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

3.1. Lamberto Pignotti, 'poesia visiva' and the constitution of Gruppo 70

If Bussotti's experience and the interdisciplinary nature of his artistic conception definitely took shape outside Florence, the openness to the various components of the arts and the search for their interrelation characterized more and more openly the thinking of many artists who gravitated around the city. It was in this context that the foundations were laid that, in the late 1950s, led to the formation of the group that later officially constituted itself as 'Gruppo 70'.

I could reconstruct some of the stages of this process also thanks to an exceptional witness, who has added or clarified elements with respect to the albeit accurate pre-existing reconstructions: Lamberto Pignotti.[26] As with Bussotti, the roots of Pignotti's artistic approach lie in his childhood and family. Born to a painter father, he manifested an early aptitude toward figurative art; it coexisted, however, with interests in the literary world, which brought single issues of magazines, between the goliardic and the post-futurist, such as *Il Monitore* and *La Nozione*

to creation on the occasion of the university freshmen's party in 1949 and 1950. Finally, Pignotti decided to embrace poetry following a diagnosis of progressive vision loss for him. The medical affair and its auspicious outcome helped to create the conditions for the definition, together with visual artists Antonio Bueno and Eugenio Miccini, of and adherence to a new conception of poetic production, based not on the words as such but on the interaction of image, usually taken from newspapers or magazines, and words: these could be either cut and pasted or manuscript. This cenacle outlined a form of poetry based on a specific and new form of intersection that Pignotti himself, in first half of the1960s, defined 'verbo-visiva [verbo-visual]', a neologism which indicated a new and unprecedented interaction of image and words. Indeed, it did not respond to the criteria of the poetic-visual precedents of the Futurists or Apollinaire, which were still based on the centrality of the graphic-alphabetic sign on the page:[27] in it, it becomes difficult to distinguish the boundary between 'visual art' and 'poetry'. More properly it consists in a form of synthesis, which, in 1965, with the publication of the anthology *Poesie visive* edited by Pignotti, definitely took the name of 'poesia visiva [visual poetry]', a syntagma that had actually been circulating for some time and acquired the meaning we are observing in that year. It gives rise to poetic works that are actually inherently inter-artistic (but perhaps could also be called 'trans-artistic'), which could be published not necessarily in a book and could (or had to) be shown in a wall display, exhibition or art gallery.[28]

One relevant aspect of 'poesia visiva' was the reference to contemporaneity, its objects and its forms of communication. Pignotti defined these features speaking of 'technological poetry', having in mind, for this aspect, the reflection of Max Bence, the theorist of concrete poetry.[29] However, 'poesia visiva' differs also from concrete poetry for the central role it gives to the image (e.g. photographs, designs etc.).[30] In an attempt to untie the difficult knot of the distinction between visual and literary work that this characterization determines, Pignotti explained that the visual poems, 'while posing some of the problems of painting, are not painting, because they must be read, they must be read above all'.[31] But perhaps since this definition seems to place the image decidedly in second place to the word, on another occasion, also in 1965, he clarified:

> A visual poem can be hung on the wall like a painting and only in this sense (it can also be the object of buying and selling) competes with painting. It is in fact not to be read in the key of painting. Unless we misunderstand or want to misunderstand the meaning of such an experience. Underlying it is in fact always a relationship between word and image.[32]

Nevertheless, Pignotti was aware of how difficult it was to set stable boundaries

and identified this aspect as one of the weaknesses of visual poetry:

> In poems that make use of the relationship between words and pictures, one must avoid the danger of the word not being read by the recipient. Otherwise it is enjoyed 'seen' in the same way as a picture. Another danger is that the picture becomes an illustration, a commentary on the word, and then here we would fall into the misunderstanding of the poet illustrating himself with the help of visual technique.[33]

However, again Pignotti explained the meaning of this conception of a 'hanging' poem:

> a poem hanging on the wall is intentionally 'different' from a poem printed in a book [...] the diversity consists precisely in the divergent conception of proposing itself to the public: a book closes; a painting flaunts its presence even more. And in a society that ignores, or wants to ignore, poetry, it must by all means try to impose itself on the attention of even the uninitiated. What would happen if the avant-garde, coming out of the bush, began massively to post poems in the streets and squares?[34]

The sentence, with its final question, is emblematic: we find in it not only a statement of an aesthetic nature but, above all, a statement of poetics regarding the relationship of art to society. The line pursued by the artists who met in the Caffè San Marco – Pignotti, Bueno, Miccini, but also the musician Giuseppe Chiari and sometimes, thanks to Bussotti's involvement, even the German musicologist and composer Heinz-Klaus Metzger, as well as, later, Lucia Marcucci and Ketty La Rocca, who came from the school of Pietro Grossi[35] – is that of an art that does not hide itself in the ivory tower but stands in direct relation to society; of an art that lets itself be touched by contemporary society and commits to its advancement. It is precisely in this perspective that, in order to explain them, we must place the association's first four major public events: the *Arte e Comunicazione* conference in May 1963; the *Tecnologica* exhibition in December of that year; the *Arte e Tecnologia* conference in 1964; and the *Terza Rassegna* in 1965.

The choice of the name 'Gruppo 70' alludes at the idea of the transformation of society in a forward thinking fashion. Initially, the sodalists of the Caffè San Marco considered calling themselves 'Gruppo 63': Pignotti underlines that he emphasized such a name would not be particularly original for more than one reason. It too openly referred back to the famous Group 47, formed by German-speaking poets and writers in Vienna in 1947, and two other 'Gruppo 63' already existed.[36] Curiously, neither of these groups was the 'most famous' one yet to be formed the following October. They consisted of the group of painters from the Roman area including Giovanni Pizzo, Lucia di Luciano, Lia Drei and Francesco Guerrieri, and a group of architects. The agreed upon name responded to a two-

fold problem, the idea of keeping the reference to a year in the name and the perspective toward the future. Even though, as Pignotti himself explained in 1965, it was 'a future not too futuristic but rather at the doors',[37] therefore, it became Gruppo 70.

3.2. Giuseppe Chiari, the *Musica e segno* exhibition and the problem of the communication

Outlined in this way, the Gruppo 70 organized the great *Arte e Comunicazione* conference, which was held in Florence, at the Forte di Belvedere, from 24 to 26 May 1963. Before discussing this event in more detail, it will also be useful to take a brief look at the figure of Chiari in the context of the formation of Gruppo 70 and the aforementioned conference.[38] He was born the same year as Pignotti and grew up on the same Florentine street where Pignotti lived. Pignotti himself recalls that the two were classmates in first and second grade and continued to meet again in adolescence and early youth. The young Chiari's musical interests led him to jazz; however, as is well known, he did not continue to deepen his interest in this kind of music. By the early 1950s he had already composed his *12 Intervalli*, essential works based on the calculation of intervallic elements. When observed in the light of their respective artistic developments, Chiari's logical-mathematical aspect brought him into surprising consonance with another musician, Pietro Grossi, who also called Florence home and whom we shall touch upon shortly.

Consistent with the diaspora mentioned at the beginning and its singular consequences, Chiari did not end up defining his artistic path in Florence, but in Germany, precisely in Wiesbaden. He arrived there in 1962 through the intermediation of Heinz-Klaus Metzger (thus of Bussotti, who in turn was *trait-d'union* between Metzger and the Florentine *milieu*) to join the Fluxus Festival with his new piece *Gesti sul piano*. Chiari, in fact, felt a profound consonance between the demands of the newly established international movement and his own research on sound, music and the action of making music in different terms than the current ones. This consonance passed through aspects such as the indissoluble link between art and life and its many forms; the tension toward a new form of knowledge and of communication through art; and a vision of artistic action that transcended disciplines.

For Chiari, 1962 was not only the year of his participation in the Fluxus Festival in Wiesbaden, but also of an exhibition that he and Bussotti set up at the Galleria "Numero" in Rome and then remounted in Palermo, Milan, Buffalo and Florence for the third season of Vita Musicale Contemporanea in 1963 (FIGURE 1). Entitled *Musica e segno. Esposizione di grafia musicale contemporanea* [*Music and*

Sign. An Exhibition of Contemporary Musical Handwriting], it leads our discourse to intersect with that of the new forms of musical writing, which increasingly also conferred the value of visual and musical works on compositions based on them. According to what Metzger wrote in the brief introduction to the exhibition, reproduced in the flyer for the Milan exhibition inaugurated on 26 November 1962, such unprecedented notational typologies aim to 'communicate to us music pieces as yet unknown to their own composers, and which they will learn precisely through them'.[39]

FIGURE 1. **Program of Vita Musicale Contemporanea 1963: front page and page [9]. Document donated to the author by Pietro Grossi. Author's private collection.**
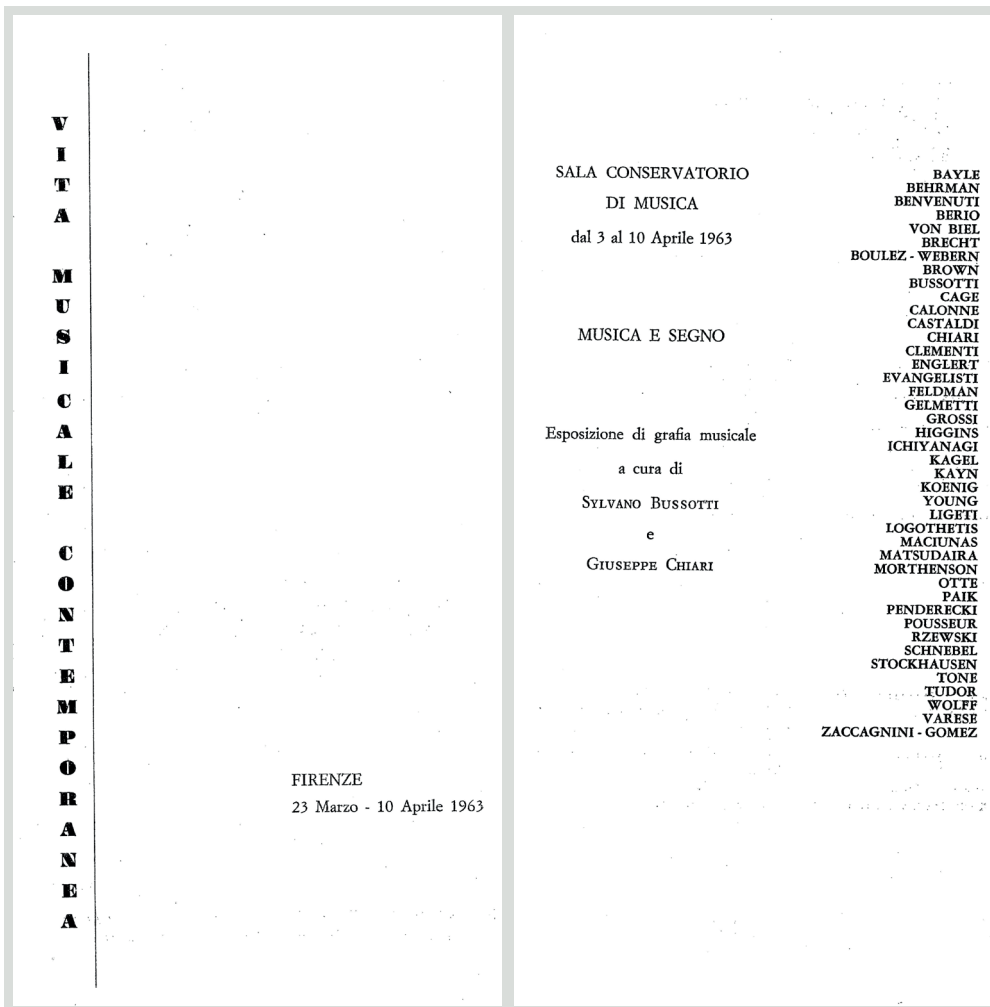
'Communicate' is, in this context, a crucial term. Indeed, the theme of 'communication' is fundamental in the poetics and actions of the artists who we are observing, and was at the root of the *Musica e Segno* exhibition. Chiari himself mentioned it in a short article published in the *Giornale di Sicilia* on 29 September 1962, on the occasion of the Palermo exhibition inaugurated the day before.[40]

Chiari's brief writing does not deal with the problem of the relationship between music and sign except allusively through the juxtaposition of 'two compositional conceptions: the structural and the aleatory [and] the clash between formalists and nonconformists, between builders and destroyers, between professionals and amateurs'.[41] Within this sort of tussle,

> the amateur in all the arts is he who wants to do a thing without knowing how to do it. The risk he runs in his work is to convey a message that is too brief or, better, too approximate [...]. The professional is at the opposite extreme: he is the one who knows how to do a 'thing' perfectly. But he also runs a risk, that of looking at 'perfection'.[42]

The consequence is that

> The logical organization of a set of elements must not make one forget that these elements have their own original nature and that the author, whether his architecture is as solid or as fragile as a house of playing cards, always remains responsible for having chosen these elements and not others. The problem is therefore to be framed in the practical one of communication. Composition is always a presentation of gestures, matters, words in a given day and in a given society [...].[43]

3.3. The *Arte e Comunicazione* conference (1963)

The centrality of the theme of communication for this group of artists is made evident, not only in these lines, but especially, in the choice to dedicate the conference that marked their official establishment and public debut as Gruppo 70, in May 1963, precisely to the problem of communication. The event was interdisciplinary in the broadest sense of the term: it was attended by representatives of painting, literature, criticism, aesthetics, sociology, psychology, architecture, and musicology.[44] Participants also included figures such as Luciano Anceschi, Umberto Eco, Elio Pagliarani, and Edoardo Sanguineti, who would go on to form the well-known Gruppo 63 in Palermo shortly thereafter; and Renato Barilli, who proposed a sort of a 'doppio tesseramento [double membership]' to the two groups.[45]

Within the general topic, one of the central themes of the kermis was the problem of contemporaneity and the avant-garde. We will observe it in the contributions of the 'founders' of Gruppo 70, in order to better understand their aesthetic positions.

After a general introduction by Gillo Dorfles, Pignotti dwelt on the face and function of the avant-garde in industrialized society and emphasized three aspects that can be condensed as follows: 1. there is an increase in avant-garde movements; 2. these movements can find their patron in industry which will transform them into objects of consumption ('industry has therefore given the coup de grace to the avant-garde by embalming it then for the use and consumption of the masses', Pignotti states precisely);[46] 3. 'the perspective that opens up before the artist is therefore that of the overcoming of the avant-garde, an overcoming that is heralded in the sign of rationality and communication'.[47]

Clearly, the reflections of Gruppo 70 entail a critical rethinking of the concept of 'avant-garde'. Pignotti denounces the progressive loss of weight and efficacy of the 'avant-garde' with respect to its traditional characteristics of radical change, even to the point of provocation, in favor of a new form that has been crystallized in its modes and thus becomes merely functional to the social structure in which it is placed.

For Gruppo 70, however, communication and the drive for change remain the purpose of artistic action. It is no coincidence that in his own short report for the painting section Antonio Bueno resolves the frequent aporia between avant-garde, communication and comprehensibility by pointing precisely to the future as the ideal recipient of his message:

> The need to communicate with everyone is implicitly present in all genuine works of art, yet paradoxically a large part of modern art takes refuge in, say, anti-communication. The paradox dissolves, I think, only that we do not forget that art, and especially modern art, is a revolutionary phenomenon [...]. Real art considers this society of ours illegitimate and refuses to cooperate. Hence the need to create ever new ruptures and to attempt talks with only representatives of the 'after'.[48]

Music was present in the conference with both a theoretical session on 24 May and a concert-reading on 25 May. In the concert, Bussotti presented his *Lettura di Braibanti*, with the contribution of Liliana Poli; Chiari performed *Gesti sul piano*; and Pietro Grossi and Arrigo Benvenuti contributed with their compositions (*Folia* and *P 4 M 3* respectively). Concerning the session of papers on 'Musica e avanguardia [Music and the avant-garde]', Roman Vlad coordinated the contributions of Paolo Castaldi, Ugo Duse, Chiari and Metzger.[49] The latter expounded a theory in French, with obvious Adornian turns of phrase, which

we could call the illusory communication of art music of the past: it would not really communicate something but would give the audience the illusion of doing so by stimulating a mechanism where recognition of what is already known contributes to satisfy expectations.[50] For his part, Chiari, also a participant in the Fluxus experience, shifted his discourse from the strictly musical sphere to the more broadly artistic and social sphere: he thus opposed a distinction between types of musical performance on the basis of three arguments: '1) because the fact always remains that society contains them all; 2) because there will undoubtedly exist relationships, contrasts, influences of one on the other; 3) because every performance, every performance custom undoubtedly implies in the social situation a human condition'.[51]

4. FROM *TECNOLOGICA* TO THE END OF THE DECADE

4.1. The electronic musician Pietro Grossi and Vita Musicale Contemporanea

As recalled, Chiari, during the 1950s, had also become profoundly close to Pietro Grossi. Venetian by birth (1917), Bolognese by training, but Florentine since 1942 for professional and family reasons, Grossi pushed his research in a very different direction from the one we are observing, in favor of a rigorously rationalizing type of approach, up to a form of mathematical abstraction. A point of reference in this process are the works simply entitled *Composizione* (1959–1961): in *Composizione n. 11* for voice (or cello) and harpsichord and *Composizione n. 12* for string quartet he pushed combinatorial calculus to its extreme consequences so as to arrive, with *Composizione n. 12*, at a work that was, even by his own definition, 'ineseguibile [unperformable]'.[52] *Composizione n. 12* was also his last work for a traditional ensemble. In fact, during the same period he was visiting the Studio di Fonologia Musicale in Milan to devote himself to electronic music and computer-music, and in 1963 he set up, at his own expense and in his own apartment, the Studio di Fonologia Musicale in Florence, which he synthetically called 'S 2F M'. Those same investigations, carried out with his first pupils, also resulted in the work presented at the *Arte e Comunicazione* conference concert.

Grossi also participated in the interdisciplinary climate typical of his adopted city and in the instance of renewal brought forth by the artists of Gruppo 70. At the head of a committee composed of Luciano Alberti, Elisabeth Borghese Mann, Claudio Greppi, Amleto Manetti and Pietro Scarpini, in 1960, he promoted the creation of Vita Musicale Contemporanea [Contemporary Musical Life], an association dedicated to the knowledge of contemporary music, and its first festival

of concerts. We read in the communiqué issued on letterhead to invite Florentine artists and intellectuals to participate in it: the aforementioned initiative 'in order to have guaranteed success will have to be supported by all those who follow today's art in its various manifestations'.[53]

Vita Musicale Contemporanea was active until 1967. Its interdisciplinary character and its ambition to promote contact, not only between the various arts but also between the arts and the sciences, was reflected in the appointment of physicist Giuliano Toraldo di Francia as president. The initiative resulted in the organization of six seasons of musical events between 1961 and 1967, which in the first three included visual exhibitions. The visual arts exhibitions of the first two seasons were hosted at the Galleria "L'Indiano" and involved painters from the Florentine area, including Alberto Moretti, who came from the Movimento di Arte Concreta. However, the exhibition of the third season was staged at the Conservatorio "Luigi Cherubini" and consisted of the Florentine staging of *Musica e Segno,* from 3 to 10 April 1963, just over a month before *Arte e Comunicazione.*[54]

4.2. The *Tecnologica* exhibition and the concept of 'technology' in Gruppo 70

The *Tecnologica* exhibition organized by Gruppo 70 at the Galleria "Quadrante", from 19 December 1963 to January 1964, can be considered as much the development of the *Arte e Comunicazione* conference as it was prodromal to the subsequent *Arte e Tecnologia*. In the accompanying publication, Pignotti defines it as:

> a proposal of artistic manifestation substantially unprecedented, aimed at tracing, verifying and proposing the possible, latent methodological-operational relationships between different sectors of aesthetic production and fruition [...]. A parallel and joint team work on three sides: poetry, painting, music is therefore proposed here. This is what scholars of aesthetics and cultural anthropology usually call today 'interdisciplinarity': but in this case it is better to stick to a more circumscribed meaning: 'interartisticity'.[55]

This connotation emerges from all three introductory writings by poet Pignotti, painter Bueno, and musician Chiari, each of whom presents his colleagues and addresses the theme from his own perspective. According to Pignotti's reception of Bense, the concept of 'technology' refers back to the contemporary society, which is technological by definition, rather than to technology in the current sense.[56] The 'technological' poet is one who 'takes linguistic material from a universe of discourse that usually does not pertain to him in order to employ it with an aesthetic intentionality and purpose'; likewise, the works of technological painters 'lend themselves to being read in the key of a collective poetics roughly

FIGURE 2. **Antonio Bueno in collaboration with Lamberto Pignotti and Giuseppe Chiari,** *Homo Technologicus*, **1964. Comics by Lamberto Pignotti, music by Giuseppe Chiari. Sentences from Lamberto Pignotti,** *Nozione di uomo*, **Mondadori 1964. Lamberto Pignotti's private archive.**
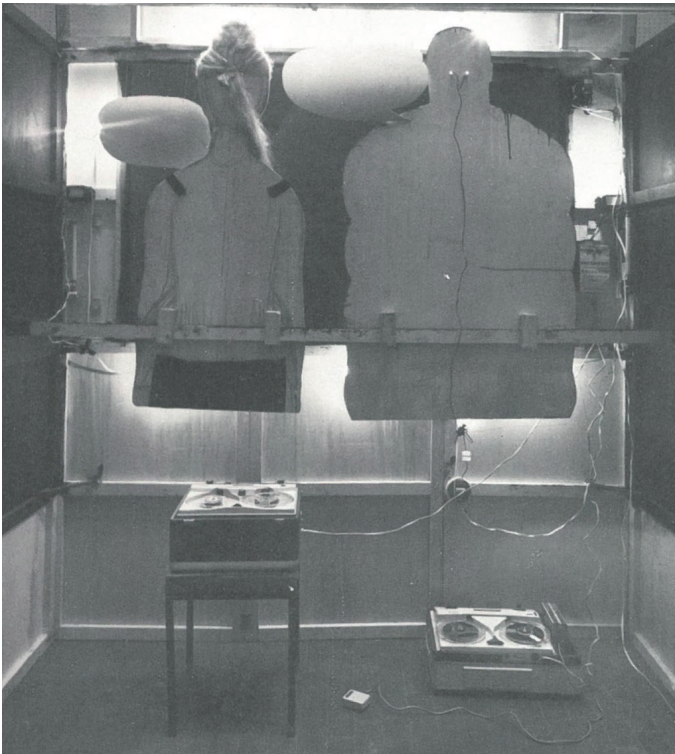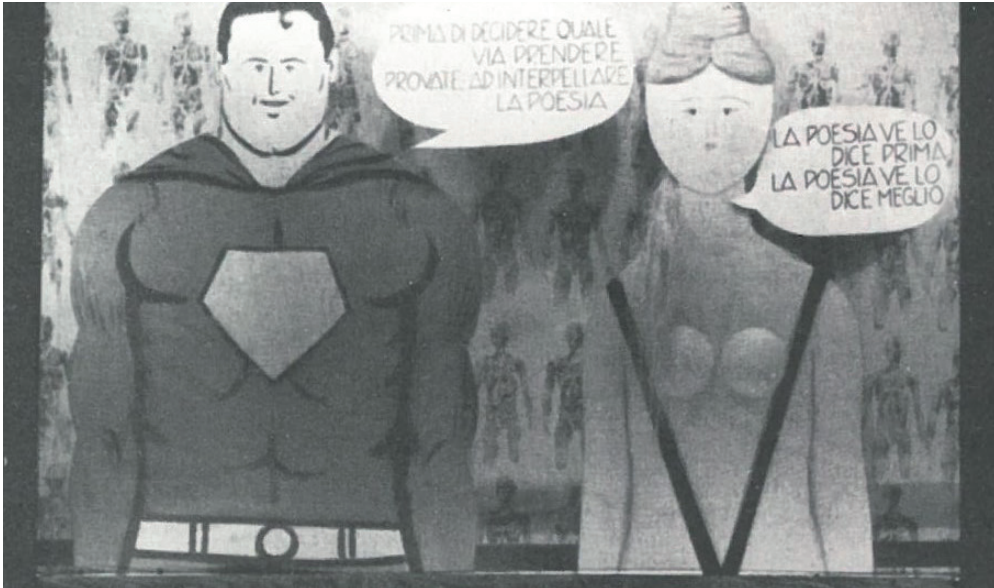
definable as an aesthetic-semantic-communicative re-actualization of models of various origins worn out by the use of mass society'.[57] The results are works of 'technological' visual poetry and 'technological' painting for which the boundaries between artistic domains, already labile for 'visual poetry' *per se*, become even more uncertain.

To exemplify the extremely broad sense of the concept of 'technology' (which clearly has nothing to do with the traditional meaning of the term), music is present in the exhibition not with Grossi's electronic music but through Chiari and Bussotti: their works, Pignotti writes, 'seem objectively to want to answer questions implicitly posed by technological civilization'.[58] From this point of view, the definition of 'technology' that Chiari makes his own in his paper can be considered a further broadening of the horizon:

> 'Technology' can only mean awareness of living in an increasingly technical, increasingly industrial, increasingly serial world. The suspension of judgment proper to many formal and structural investigations is no longer permitted. Technique becomes the theme – no longer the medium – and a topic to be addressed, usually, with critical violence. The artists who present themselves at *Quadrante,* although very dissimilar from each other, are united in this [...] direction, which is only apparently negative and provocative, containing instead a precise commitment.[59]

Together, Bueno, Pignotti and Chiari will contribute to Antonio Bueno's *Homo Technologicus*, a 'pittura-spettacolo [painting-show]'[60] where the works were devices that functioned like jukeboxes (FIGURE 2). It was a collective work set up in Reggio Emilia at the second meeting of Gruppo 63, 1–3 November 1964, and, as Chiari wrote, 'reopens the problem of the division of the arts'.[61] In dealing with it, Chiari emphasized the doubts that such a work might raise in a general and, above all, conservative public: the destruction of the 'baraccone da luna-park' (fairground stall, as he also called it) by a group of conservative visitors proved him right.[62]

4.3. The *Arte e Tecnologia* conference (1964) and the 'Festival' of 1965

The large *Arte e Tecnologia* conference, held at the Forte di Belvedere from 27–29 June 1964, was a development of *Tecnologica*. Many factors contributed to the exorbitant nature of the program, the way it was devised, the collaborations with other entities, the figures involved, and a constant, widespread, perhaps even central presence of music over the three days. We read in the conference brochure: 'To the relationship between music and technology can [...] be ascribed the use of new musical graphics, the abandonment of the instruments institutionalized

by the concert or their unconventional use, as well as the search for new types of musical performance open to contaminations with prose, mimicry, cinema, etc.'.[63]

The authors and musical works presented in two auditions of 'recorded music' and two concerts (27 and 28 May) embrace John Cage, Giuseppe Chiari, Cornelius Cardew, La Monte Young, György Ligeti, and, unlike in the *Tecnologica* exhibition, include compositions of an electronic nature, although the absence from the kermis of Pietro Grossi and his works is significant (from his school, however, Vittorio Gelmetti participated).

An analysis of the debate, published right after in *Marcatre* (nos. 11–13), shows how, even by means of direct polemical exchanges, it reveals a multiform of positions that are difficult to reconcile: to look only at the musical sphere, the two sessions on 'recorded music' (in the first one, an excerpt from *Modulations for Michelangelo* by Vittorio Gelmetti is presented) are counterbalanced by Kagel's critical considerations about the link, intentional or not, between composers of 'electronic and concrete music' and market society and mass consumption,[64] which could explain Grossi's absence from the kermis. This difference of views, not included in a dialectical vision, can also be observed with respect to the organizers of the conference themselves: Eugenio Battisti and especially Piero Raffa are not gentle with Pignotti and Miccini and their own idea of relationship with society and 'poesia tecnologica [technological poetry]'.[65]

This evident disparity of approaches, which is also reflected in increasing fractures within Gruppo 70, may have contributed to the conception of the Group's third event, which took place in 1965: a more open 'festival' structure and a more pronounced centrality of the poetic aspect and visual poetry over conceptual and specialized debate. Among the events of the festival it may be useful to recall here the *Luna-Park* exhibition, with the collective work *Preistoria contemporanea* [*Contemporary Prehistory*] (FIGURE 3), in which, as Pignotti recently wrote, 'poetry, painting and music dance more and more together',[66] with *Homo Technologicus*, it suggested what a music labeled 'Gruppo 70' could have been if developed: there Bueno, Pignotti, and Chiari converge again, and Bussotti is added.

The 1965 festival, demonstrating a problematic nature now intrinsic to Gruppo 70, was not followed by similar new initiatives, and, in 1968, the experience of the cenacle and its very existence came to a definitive end. In the meantime, figures such as Chiari, Bussotti, and Grossi were continuing their own research and, on the Florentine scene, the young Daniele Lombardi, a piano pupil of Rio Nardi and a student of the Accademia delle Arti, thus a pianist and painter, had appeared. He was a fundamental figure for anyone touching on the theme of the interrelation between music and visual arts in Florence from the late 1960s

onward, not only because of his dual artistic training and production, but also because of his personal figurative conception, and works defined 'Augenmusik – Musica per occhi', where the sign on the page is itself precisely 'music to be seen' and thus does not necessarily need any acoustic transposition.[67]

FIGURE 3. *Preistoria contemporanea*. Show-painting by Gruppo 70. Luna Park Exhibition, Galleria La Vigna Nuova, Florence, 1965. Photograph and sketch on cardboard by Antonio Bueno. Lamberto Pignotti's private archive.
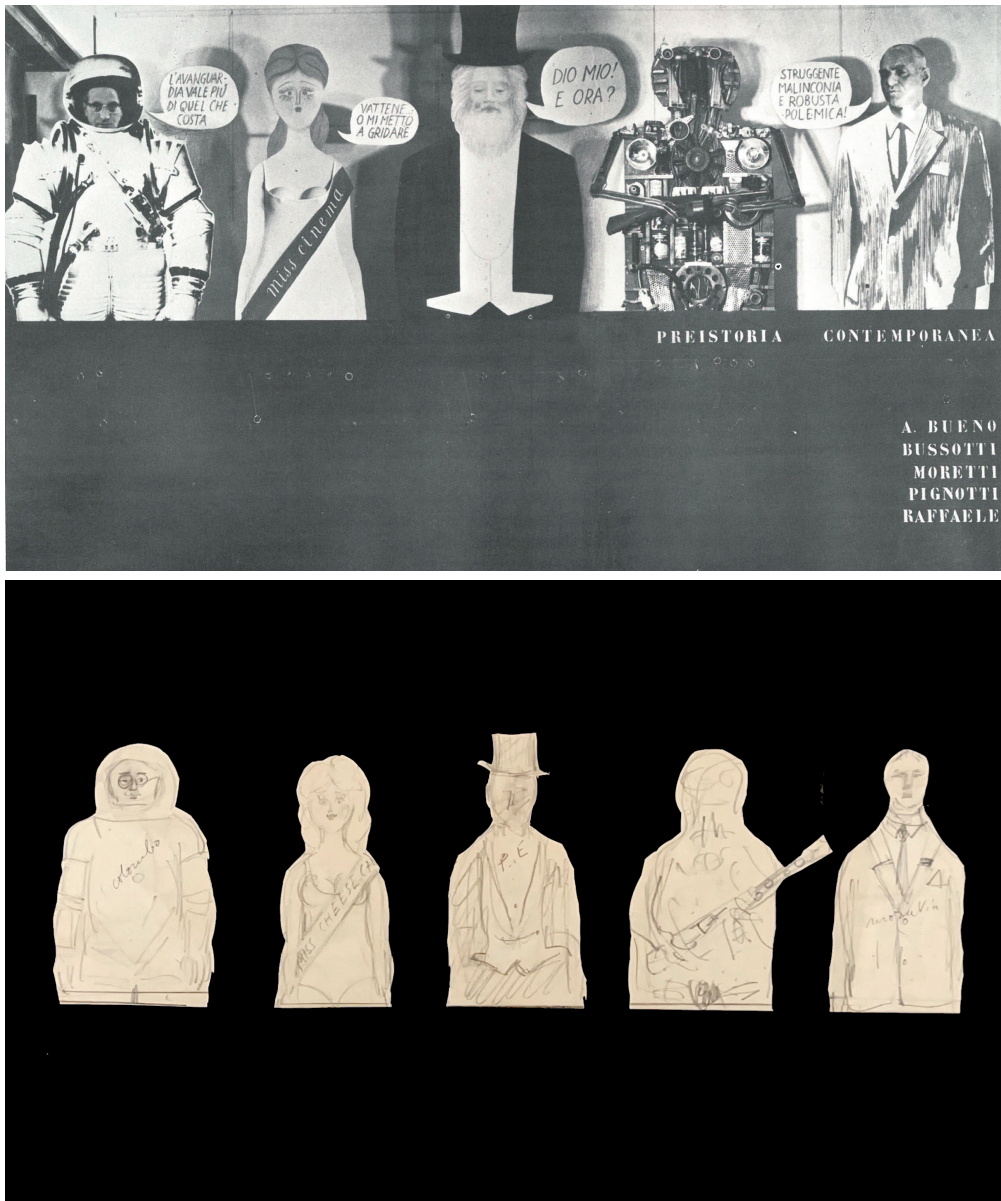
CONCLUSION. FLORENCE IN THE 1950s AND 1960s: A RICHNESS WAITING TO BE DISCOVERED

Over time experiences open and close, they conclude and they begin. At this point we merit returning to the scene painted at the beginning of this contribution, about Florentine artistic life and the image that one had and often still has of it, conditioned by its most exaggerated and noisy component.[68]

In one of my conversations with Lamberto Pignotti, on 27 April 2023, I asked him directly, 'what was happening in Florence in culture in the 1950s?'. He abruptly answered something like 'almost nothing' and, to support this reaction, he recalled a writing of his from the late 1960s in which, having now moved to Rome, he expressed his boredom and weariness with the environment he had left behind: he had entitled it *La noia di Firenze* [*The boredom of Florence*].[69] Then he began recounting events and situations, naming people; among many, Charlotte Moorman, the cellist and Fluxus artist wife of Nam June Paik, whom he hosted in his own home during her Florentine sojourns and to whom he mailed postcards with texts intended for her performances. So, after talking for several minutes, seeing my increasingly astonished expression, he had to acknowledge, somewhat surprised, that in fact that 'almost nothing' was instead populated with diverse personalities and initiatives of enormous depth. However, at the time, neither he nor the artists and intellectuals themselves active in the city perhaps grasped to the full extent and scope of them, conditioned as they were by the often vociferous contestations exhibited by their counterparts, and thus confined to an image of Florence as closed, tired, boring, old, merely hostile to change and dominated by the resentment of nostalgic conservatives.[70]

One could ponder at length the reasons for this perceptual and perspectival distortion that extended its action even over the following decades, despite many signs of the contrary. It, first of all, seems to be the result of that droning traditionalist campaign, together with the myth of elsewhere, had characterized postwar Florence yet didn't manage to stifle instances of renewal, such as the radical proposals of Gruppo 70. As if on cue, Pignotti himself sarcastically corroborates this interpretative hypothesis:

> Florence is the environment of boredom. Boredom that is, is intentional, it's really a poetics. All serious people here. [...] In Florence they have always seen everything before, no matter what. Organize avant-garde conferences, experimental festivals, visual poetry exhibitions [...]: those, the usual and few, come there, look and yawn, hear and yawn. If you tell them something tomorrow (otherwise they keep quiet) they tell you, precisely, that these are things that have already been done. By the Americans, by the Futurists, by the Assyro-Babylonians... Maybe you happen to participate in

person or with your works in international exhibitions, events, festivals or conferences, but for Florentine public opinion you are always a champion of the local avant-garde. After all, Florence is a pleasant holyday resort, at least in the mid-seasons...[71]

The question always remains to understand the reasons for this attitude of ostentatious 'indifferent' disdain whose force conditioned the artists themselves. In addition to what has been said, one could perhaps also attribute this situation to a general cultural climate that – grafting itself on a well-known characteristic of the Florentine soul, which is difficult to explain in scientific terms – lived as an indispensable moment the distinction, the polemics, and the oppositions up to the *aut aut*. After all, looking only at Gruppo 70, at its constitution and its dissolution in 1968, coinciding also with Pignotti's move to Rome, it will be enough to follow the passage from *Quartiere* to *Protocolli* and then from *Protocolli* to *Oggidì* and *Dopotutto* to get the picture of a history of encounters, clashes and splits.[72]

But, if in all this, Gruppo 70 was born and died out, and if a cultural capital was or appeared 'dissipated' even in the eyes of one of its greatest proponents and protagonists, the documentary reconstruction and historical perspective reveal, to today's observer, a context of astonishing interdisciplinary richness whose historical essence and legacy still appear largely to be rediscovered.

Notes

*   I would like to deeply thank Lamberto Pignotti, his wife Fernanda Salbitano, and Renato Barilli for the time they dedicated to meeting me and talking with me about Florence, Gruppo 70 and culture in the 1960s (and today). I would also like to thank Pignotti for providing me with the images of *Homo Technologicus* (**FIGURE 2**) and *Preistoria contemporanea* (**FIGURE 3**).

1   'La divisione delle arti è a difesa di una nobiltà [...] Sono convinto che far musica equivalga ad affermare continuamente, implicitamente, l'impossibilità di uno specifico musicale'. Giuseppe Chiari, [note to *Gesti sul piano*], in: *Firenze nel dopoguerra: aspetti della vita musicale dagli anni '50 a oggi*, a cura di Leonardo Pinzauti, Sergio Sablich, Piero Santi e Daniele Spini, Fiesole (Fi): OpusLibri, 1983, pp. 37–38: 37. All English translations of Italian quotations are the author's.

2   We will focus on these initiatives further in this contribution. An overview in: *Continuità. Arte in Toscana 1945–2000. Regesto generale*, a cura di Sistema Metropolitano Arte Contemporanea, Pistoia: Maschietto editore, 2002 (in part. Daniele Lombardi, 'Musica', pp. 81–107, and 'Regesto cronologico illustrato 1945–2000', pp. 137–319, to the realization of which the writer contributed with regard to musical activities); *Firenze e la musica italiana del secondo Novecento*, a cura di Renzo Cresti e Eleonora Negri, Firenze: LoGisma, 2004; and *Firenze nel dopoguerra: aspetti della vita musicale dagli anni '50 a oggi*.

3   Within a rather rich bibliography, on Gruppo 70 see *Firenze La Storia. La Poesia Visiva, un*

percorso internazionale 1963–1968, a cura di Perseo Centroartivisive, Firenze: OpusLibri, 1990; *La poesia in immagine / L'immagine in poesia. Gruppo 70. Firenze 1963–2013*, a cura di Teresa Spignoli, Marco Corsi, Federico Fastelli e Maria Carla Papini, Pasian di Prato (UD): Campanotto editore, 2013; *Gruppo 70. Una guerriglia verbo-visiva*, a cura di Raffaella Perna, Firenze: Gallerie Frittelli (exhibition catalogue), 2023, single issue of *Speciale Gruppo 70*, Firenze–Milano: Frittelli arte contemporanea – Silvana editoriale, 2023; "*La poesia ti guarda*". *Omaggio al Gruppo 70 (1963–2003)*, a cura di Daniela Vasta, Roma: De Luca (exhibition catalogue, Roma, GAM, 2023–2024), 2023.

4   The term was used in 1963 in Lamberto Pignotti, [untitled intervention], *Quadrante*, 24, December 1963 (monographic issue: *Tecnologica*), w.p.

5   'Ci è parso conseguente mettere sul tavolo della discussione alcune tessere di un discorso non apologetico, e anche autocritico, su ciò che Firenze ha dilapidato senza rendersene sufficientemente conto [It seemed to us consequent to put on the table for discussion some pieces of a non-apologetic, and even self-critical, discourse on what Florence squandered without realizing it sufficiently]'. Lamberto Pignotti, 'Da Firenze con parole, immagini e altro', in: *Il Gruppo 70 tra parola e immagine*, a cura di Stefania Stefanelli, Firenze: Società editrice fiorentina, 2004, pp. XI–XIX: XIX.

6   For a reconstruction of the whole affair in the light of press and archival materials, see Ferruccio Canali, 'La promozione della Modernità: la stagione delle grandi Mostre internazionali di Architettura a Firenze: 1951, "Frank Lloyd Wright, Sixty Years of Living Architecture" ... e il contributo di Oskar Stonorof, di Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti e di Edoardo Detti', *Bollettino della Società di Studi Fiorentini*, 20–21, 2011–2012, pp. 52–88.

7   See 'Verbale della seduta del 21 dicembre 1948', 'Verbale della seduta del 10 gennaio 1949', 'Nuovo Statuto', *Piazza delle Belle Arti. Rassegna 1950 dell'Accademia Nazionale "Luigi Cherubini" di Musica, Lettere e Arti figurative*, I, 1950 (review's section *Atti ufficiali dell'Accademia*), respectively pp. 93, 94–95, and 102–108.

8   'piace che si abbia il coraggio di non rinnegare la paternità delle proprie creazioni anche se oggi non fanno onore, e nella mostra di Wright ce n'erano parecchie'. See Armando Venè, 'La mostra delle architetture di Frank Lloyd Wright', *Piazza delle Belle Arti*, II, 1951–1952, pp. 62–63: 62.

9   'Per me se un errore c'è stato, è stato quello di scegliere Firenze per la presentazione di questo artista o meglio per la presentazione dell'opera completa dell'artista. Forse Milano o Torino sarebbero state sedi più adatte e le polemiche sarebbero state certo meno accese e vibranti, ché, veramente, non tutti i pareri sono stati concordi nel giudizio e non solo nel mondo accademico ufficiale che si è tenuto prudentemente e forse non inopportunamente lontano anche dalla inaugurazione, ma degli stessi giovani che era da presumersi, avrebbero potuto meglio capire l'opera, se non l'artista. […] Gioventù che non poteva dimenticare come proprio il Wright si era prestato all'opera di denigrazione dell'Arte nostra'. Venè, 'La mostra delle architetture di Frank Lloyd Wright', pp. 62–63.

10   'c'è anche qui a casa nostra gente che studia, medita, lavora e crea architetture nuove e qualche volta belle, senza per questo darsi troppe arie e senza negare un passato che è ed è stato di gloria e di luce non soltanto per noi! Ma forse è facile negare la storia a quei popoli che ancora non hanno storia o per lo meno l'hanno ancora troppo lucida e forbita'. Venè, 'La mostra delle architetture di Frank Lloyd Wright', p. 63.

11   See, e.g., Leonardo Pinzauti, *Storia del Maggio. Dalla nascita della "Stabile Orchestrale Fiorentina" (1928) al festival del 1993*, Lucca: LIM, 1994, pp. 23–24, and Paolo Somigli, *La Schola fiorentina*, Firenze: Nardini, 2011, pp. 9–28, where, pp. 18–28, various examples are given.

12   Lualdi's evident presence and action on the Comunale's activities and programming can be

seen in the *Concerto di musica italiana contemporanea* he conducted on 29 May 1948 and based on traditionalist choices, with the provocative performance of the *Rapsodia per la morte del Conte Orlando* by a young Luigi Dallapiccola, far removed from the twelve-tone composer he already was; in the staging of his *La figlia del re* [*The king's daughter*] in the 1952–1953 opera season; and finally in staging of the new version of *Il diavolo nel campanile* [*The devil in the bell tower*] in the XVII Maggio Musicale Fiorentino (1954), with the newly inserted twelve-tone series to depict the devil.

13 For an overview see Teresa Spignoli, *I caffè letterari a Firenze*, Firenze: Polistampa, 2009, pp. 45–110, and Simone Magherini, *Avanguardie storiche a Firenze e altri studi tra Otto e Novecento*, Firenze: Società Editrice Fiorentina, 2012, pp. 105–235.

14 See Somigli, *La Schola fiorentina*, *passim* and pp. 44–67.

15 On the Caffè San Marco see Spignoli, *I caffè letterari*, pp. 87–93 (with reference to the nucleus from which Group 70 sprang, see pp. 92–93).

16 The affair, often mentioned only as an intermediate stage in the journey that took Rauschenberg from Rome to Venice, is reconstructed in often approximate terms, with errors and contradictions even of year and place. For a more precise reconstruction of it, see Rossella Caruso, 'Robert Rauschenberg alla Galleria L'Obelisco. Scatole e feticci personali', in: Irene Brin, *Gaspero del Corso e la Galleria L'Obelisco*, a cura di Vittoria Caterina Caratozzolo, Ilaria Schiaffini e Claudio Zambianchi, Roma: Drago Publishing, 2018, pp. 205–216, and Mawell Ian Eric Barnes, *Rauschenberg's Journey to Dante: Or How to Keep a Clean Head (2017)*, Senior Projects Spring 2017, 217, https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2017/217 [7 July 2024].

17 'qualcosa di così pericoloso come la "serie a 12 suoni"!'. Sylvano Bussotti, *Musica per amici, Istruzione, a) cronaca*, manuscript, Paris 1957, w.p.; photocopy received from Daniele Lombardi stored in my archive.

18 See Paolo Somigli, *La Schola fiorentina*, *passim* and pp. 107–124.

19 The name 'Sylvano' was chosen as a result of an editorial error in a mid-1950s French chronicle that at first irritated the composer. The story was reconstructed punctually by Paolo Fallai, 'La vita è un esordio anche a 80 anni', *Corriere della sera*, 7 February 2010, p. 29.

20 Paradoxically, such a spirit is also behind Lualdi's creation of the "Luigi Cherubini" Academy of Arts.

21 On Bussotti and his childhood see Luigi Esposito, *Un male incontenibile. Sylvano Bussotti, artista senza confini*, Milano: Bietti, 2013.

22 The Torrione context is reconstructed as the starting point of the movie *Il signore delle formiche* (2022), directed by Gianni Amelio, and dedicated to the artistical, human, and juridical path of Braibanti in the conservative and homophobic Italy of 1960s.

23 'Prima visione per la critica del cortometraggio d'Aldo e mio'. Letter from Bussotti to Arrigo Benvenuti, Riva del Garda, 21 September 1955, Fondo Arrigo Benvenuti, Sala Musica, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (Firenze). I quote from the copy received by Liliana Poli in 2004 along with most of Bussotti's letters to Benvenuti and kept in my archive. Bussotti offers interesting reflections on the Torrione experience in his coeval correspondence with his friend Arrigo; I deal with it with references to documentary materials in 'From Silvano to Sylvano. The young Bussotti in the mirror of his letters to Arrigo Benvenuti', in: *Perspectives on Sylvano Bussotti*, ed. by Julia Freund, Federica Marsico, and Matteo Nanni, forthcoming.

24 On this aspect of Bussotti's youthful activity, see also Paolo Somigli, *La Schola fiorentina*, pp. 98–101.

25 Specifically on the spelling of this work see Ronald Bogue, 'Scoring the Rhizome: Bussotti's Musical Diagram', *Deleuze Studies*, VIII/4, November 2014, pp. 470–490.

26 For the purpose of this paper, I met and interviewed Lamberto Pignotti on four occasions during the spring-summer 2023 and spring 2024 (6 March 2023; 27 April 2023; 28 June 2023; 14 March 2024): with his consent each meeting was recorded (recordings are kept in my personal archive).

27 For a historical review of the various experiences of the different forms of 'visual poetry' see Pino Masnata, *Poesia visiva: storia e teoria con un percorso iconografico (1962–1965)*, with a Presentation by Mario Verdone, Roma: Bulzoni, 1984, and the recent Teresa Spignoli, *La parola si fa spazio. Poesia concreta e poesia visiva*, Bologna: Patron, 2020.

28 The anthology of *Poesie visive* was released as a series of four little volumes that actually consist in envelops of independent cards each containing a visual poem gathered in an envelope-size folder in turn contained in a cover-container. The first staging of a visual poetry exhibition was held in 1964 in Reggio Emilia, on the occasion of the second Gruppo 63 convention. In 1965, Gruppo 70 organized its own exhibitions of visual poems in Florence (on the occasion of the Third festival held in the Galleries "La Vigna Nuova" and "Numero", then in Peretola, Circolo culturale Leonardo), Perugia (Gallery "Le muse"); further exhibitions were also staged in other venues in the subsequent years.

29 See Lamberto Pignotti, 'Poesia tecnologica', *Questo e Altro*, 2, [1962], pp. 60–68; we will dwell on this argument further in this article. However, it can be noticed how the definition, adopted by several members of the group, of this kind of poetic language as a form of 'neovolgare' (neo-vulgar language) shows a continuity of this experience with the history of Florence and Tuscany as the homeland of Dante, Petrarca, and Boccaccio, i.e. the founders of the Italian vulgar language as distinguished to the Latin as the old language of the academy and of the officiality. Pignotti himself underlined this aspect during our conversation on 14 March 2024.

30 On the topic see Spignoli, *La parola si fa spazio*, *passim* and pp. 137–140.

31 'esse [le poesie visive] pur ponendosi alcuni problemi della pittura, non sono pittura, perché vanno lette, vanno soprattutto lette'. Lamberto Pignotti, 'Per la mostra di poesia visiva del Gruppo '63 [in Reggio Emilia]', *Dopotutto*, 73, 1965 (dossier of *Letteratura*; monographic issue: *Inchiesta dell'avanguardia*), pp. 74–75: 74.

32 'Una poesia visiva può venire appesa al muro come un quadro e solo in questo senso (può anche essere oggetto di compra-vendita) fa concorrenza alla pittura. Essa infatti non va letta in chiave di pittura. A meno di fraintendere o voler fraintendere il senso di tale esperienza. Alla base di essa c'è sempre infatti un rapporto fra parola e immagine'. Lamberto Pignotti, 'Poeti all'attacco', *La Nazione*, 9 September 1965, p. 3.

33 'Nelle poesie che si servono del rapporto fra parole e immagini bisogna evitare il pericolo che la parola non venga letta dal destinatario. Altrimenti essa viene fruita, "vista" alla stregua di un quadro. Altro pericolo è che l'immagine si faccia illustrazione, commento della parola, e allora qui si cadrebbe nell'equivoco del poeta che illustra se stesso con l'aiuto della tecnica visuale'. Pignotti, 'Poeti all'attacco', p. 3.

34 'una poesia appesa al muro è intenzionalmente "diversa" da una poesia stampata in un libro […] la diversità consiste appunto nella divergente concezione di proporsi al pubblico: un libro si chiude; un quadro ostenta maggiormente la propria presenza. E in una società che ignora, o vuole ignorare, la poesia, questa deve con ogni mezzo cercare di imporsi all'attenzione anche dei non addetti ai lavori. Cosa succederebbe se l'avanguardia, uscendo dalla macchia, cominciasse massicciamente ad affiggere poesie per le strade e per le piazze?'. Pignotti, 'Per la mostra di poesia visiva del Gruppo '63', pp. 74–75.

35 Bussotti met Metzger in Paris in 1958, when he was attending Max Deutsch's classes; the two soon formed a deep artistic and human fellowship during which the two also spent several periods together in Florence (we have information of this through Bussotti's letters to Benvenuti of late 1950s beginning 1960s). While Metzger's role on the development of

Bussotti's artistic path is well known, Bussotti's action in promoting Metzger's figure in the Italian context has been substantially unnoticed until now: of it, however, we have a significant example precisely in Metzger's direct involvement in the Florentine cultural coterie, with its further developments. On Giuseppe Chiari and Pietro Grossi we will dwell a little further.

36   Author's conversation with Pignotti on 9 March 2023. Pignotti also spoke about it in 'Lamberto Pignotti. Riflessioni sugli anni Sessanta, una miniera di idee ancora da sfruttare. Conversazione con Daniela Bigi e Roberto Lambarelli', *Arte e critica*, 94, Fall 2019, pp. 68–76.

37   'un futuro non troppo avveniristico ma anzi alle porte'. Lamberto Pignotti, 'Gruppi e convegni. Le novissime armi', *La Nazione*, 27 August 1965, p. 3.

38   For an introduction to this author see at least the following texts written by Giuseppe Chiari, *Musica e segno 1*, Prato: Gli Ori, 2003; *Musica e segno 2–3*, Prato: Gli Ori 2007; *Autoritratto*, with a text by Girolamo De Simone, Firenze: Nardini, 2008.

39   'comunicarci musiche ancora ignote ai loro stessi compositori, e che questi apprenderanno proprio attraverso di esse'. Heinz-Klaus Metzger, [note to *Music and Sign*], dépliant-invitation to the exhibition *Musica e Segno*, Galleria Blu, Milan, 26 November 1962, w.p. On the question of the new musical notation and its relationship to the figurative arts see Erhard Karkoshka, *Das Schriftbild der neuen Musik*, Celle: Hermann Moeck Verlag, 1966; Daniele Lombardi, *Spartito preso. La musica da vedere*, Firenze: Vallecchi, 1981; *Grafia musicale e segno pittorico nell'avanguardia italiana (1950–1970)*, a cura di Enrica Torelli Landini, Roma: De Luca Editori d'Arte, 2012.

40   Giuseppe Chiari, 'La mostra Musica e segno inaugurata ieri pomeriggio', *Giornale di Sicilia*, 29 September 1962 (I thank Pietro Misuraca for finding this text and generously forwarding it to me).

41   'due concezioni compositive: la strutturale e l'aleatoria [e] lo scontro fra formalisti e anticonformisti, fra costruttori e distruttori, fra professionisti e dilettanti'. Chiari, 'La mostra Musica e segno inaugurata ieri pomeriggio'.

42   'Il dilettante in tutte le arti è colui che vuole fare una cosa senza saperla fare. Il rischio che corre nel suo lavoro è quello di trasmettere un messaggio troppo breve o, meglio, troppo approssimativo […]. Il professionista è all'estremo opposto: è colui che sa fare perfettamente una "cosa". Ma corre anche lui un rischio, quello di guardare alla "perfezione"'. Chiari, 'La mostra Musica e segno inaugurata ieri pomeriggio'.

43   'L'organizzazione logica di un insieme di elementi non deve far dimenticare che questi elementi hanno una loro natura originaria e che l'autore, sia che la sua architettura sia solidissima sia che sia fragile come un castello di carte da gioco, rimane sempre responsabile di aver scelto questi elementi e non altri. Il problema è quindi da inquadrare in quello pratico della comunicazione. La composizione è sempre una presentazione di gesti, materie, parole in un dato giorno e in una data società […]'. Chiari, 'La mostra Musica e segno inaugurata ieri pomeriggio'.

44   On the first issue of *Dopotutto*, a column in *Letteratura*, 67–68, a cura di Miccini e Pignotti, pp. 144–160, 'passi salienti di una serie di letture [salient passages from a series of speeches]' (actually in many cases one would say whole papers) were immediately published. In 2014 these texts were republished in *La poesia in immagine / L'immagine in poesia*, pp. 189–213. I thank the "Frittelli" Art Gallery (Florence) for providing me with a copy of the event program.

45   The definition was used by Barilli himself during an interview conversation with me in March 2023 (recording preserved in my archives; 'doppio tesseramento' alludes to the political lexicon and the membership to two different parties). Pignotti himself, while recognizing the difference between the two poetic-literary experiences and proposals, took part in the activities of Gruppo 63 and its early events, which could host works by Gruppo 70.

46   'l'industria ha dato dunque il colpo di grazia all'avanguardia imbalsamandola poi ad uso e

consumo di massa'. Lamberto Pignotti, [untitled], *Dopotutto*, 1963, pp. 145–146: 145.

47 'La prospettiva che si apre dinanzi all'artista è dunque quella del superamento dell'avanguardia, superamento che si preannuncia nel segno della razionalità e della comunicazione'. Pignotti, [untitled], p. 145.

48 'Il bisogno di comunicare con tutti è implicitamente presente in tutte le opere d'arte autentiche, eppure paradossalmente una gran parte dell'arte moderna si rifugia, dicesi, nell'anticomunicabilità. Il paradosso si scioglie, penso, solo che non ci si dimentichi che l'arte, e soprattutto l'arte moderna, è un fenomeno rivoluzionario […]. L'arte vera considera illegittima questa nostra società e si rifiuta di collaborare. Da qui il bisogno di creare sempre nuove rotture e di tentare i colloqui con i soli rappresentanti del "dopo"'. Antonio Bueno, [untitled], *Dopotutto*, 1963, p. 152.

49 However, Duse's communication was not published. In *La Nazione* of 25 May 1963, Lamberto Pignotti informs the readers that Duse's talk focused on issues of musical historiography while still taking an approach that 'collochi quest'arte nel contesto sociale [places this art [music] in the social context]'. Lamberto Pignotti, 'Arte e comunicazione, un problema del momento', *La Nazione*, 25 May 1963, p. 3. In the account, however, Pignotti does not mention either Castaldi or Metzger. As for Castaldi, he in the publication of the proceedings in *Dopotutto*, but not in the brochure, is mistakenly referred to as 'Franco' (as later in the modern edition of the proceedings).

50 Heinz-Klaus Metzger, [untitled], *Dopotutto*, pp. 154–155.

51 '1) perché rimane sempre il fatto che la società li contiene tutti; 2) perché esisteranno senz'altro rapporti, contrasti, influenze dell'uno sull'altro; 3) perché ogni spettacolo, ogni costume di spettacolo sottintende senz'altro nella situazione sociale una condizione umana'. Giuseppe Chiari, [untitled], *Dopotutto*, pp. 153–154: 153.

52 See Francesco Giomi e Marco Ligabue, *L'istante zero. Conversations and reflections with Pietro Grossi*, Firenze: SISMEL – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 1999, pp. 30–32. For an introduction to Grossi and Vita Musicale Contemporanea (on which we are going to dwell in the following paragraphs) see the volume now cited and Girolamo De Simone, *Pietro Grossi*, Firenze: Nardini, 2005 as well as Paolo Somigli, 'Pietro Grossi e il suo "ComputerBach"', in: *Bach e l'Italia. Sguardi, scambi, convergenze*, a cura di Chiara Bertoglio e Maria Borghesi, Lucca: LIM, 2022, pp. 225–238.

53 'per avere garanzia di successo dovrà essere sostenuta da tutti coloro che seguono l'arte di oggi nelle sue varie manifestazioni'. Vita Musicale Contemporanea. Comunicato, 2 December 1960; document received in copy from Pietro Grossi in September 2001 and preserved in the author's archive.

54 As proof of what has been repeatedly emphasized about the Florentine cultural climate, I report here how music critic Adelmo Damerini treats it in *La Nazione* on 5 April in his review of the opening night: 'Attigua alla Sala dei concerti v'era anche una esposizione delle nuove scritture musicali – Musica e Segno – che ogni cosiddetto compositore inventa per conto suo con segni geometrici e algebrici che obbligherebbero volta per volta, se ne valesse la pena, di studiarne il significato: significato di che? di quel prodotto che sopra si è detto. Oh! Che bella festa! [Adjacent to the Concert Hall there was also an exhibition of the new musical writings – Music and Sign – that each so-called composer invents on his own with geometric and algebraic signs that would oblige from time to time, if it were worthwhile, to study their meaning: meaning of what? Of that product mentioned above. Oh! What a beautiful party!]'. Adelmo Damerini, 'Musiche e rumori del nostro tempo', *La Nazione*, 5 April 1963, p. 6. It is not surprising, given the premises, that at the end of the season a short blurb signed by the Vice speaks of an 'episodio sfortunato [unfortunate episode]' regarding the program of the penultimate concert with 'creazioni (!) e realizzazioni indegne della Sala conservatoriale

[creations (!) and realizations unworthy of the Conservatory Hall]', and concludes by stating that the works of Luciano Berio, Bruno Maderna and Karlheinz Stockhausen performed in the last one 'non hanno fatto altro però che convincerci vieppiù della caducità e inconsistenza delle ultime teorie avanguardiste musicali [did nothing but convince us, however, more and more of the transience and inconsistency of the latest musical avant-garde theories]'. Vice, 'Concluso il ciclo di musica contemporanea', *La Nazione*, 12 April 1953, p. 6.

55 'una proposta di manifestazione artistica sostanzialmente inedita, volta a rintracciare, verificare e proporre i possibili, latenti rapporti metodologico-operativi fra settori di produzione e fruizione estetica diversi [...]. Viene dunque in questa sede proposto un lavoro parallelo e congiunto d'equipe su tre versanti: poesia, pittura, musica. È ciò che solitamente gli studiosi di estetica e di antropologia culturale chiamano oggi 'interdisciplinarità': ma nella fattispecie meglio attenersi a un'accezione più circoscritta: "interartisticità"'. Pignotti, [untitled intervention], *Tecnologica*, w.p.

56 As already noticed, Pignotti had defined the concept of 'technological poet' and 'technological poetry' already in 1962 from the pages of *Questo e Altro*. Lamberto Pignotti, 'L'industria che non si vede', *Questo e Altro*, 1, [1962], pp. 59–61, and 'Poesia tecnologica' (see above footnote 29).

57 'preleva il materiale linguistico da un universo di discorso che usualmente non è di sua pertinenza per impiegarlo con una intenzionalità e per una finalità estetiche'; 'si prestano ad esser lette in chiave di una poetica collettiva grossomodo definibile come una riattualizzazione estetico-semantica-comunicativa di moduli di varia provenienza logorati dall'uso della società di massa'. Pignotti, [untitled intervention], *Tecnologica*, w.p.

58 'sembrano obbiettivamente voler rispondere a domande implicitamente poste dalla civiltà tecnologica'. Pignotti, [untitled intervention], *Tecnologica*, w.p.

59 '"tecnologia" può significare solo consapevolezza di vivere in un mondo sempre più tecnico, sempre più industriale, sempre più seriale. La sospensione del giudizio propria di molte indagini formali e strutturali non è più ammessa. La tecnica diviene il tema – non più il mezzo – ed un tema da affrontare, di solito, con violenza critica. Gli artisti che si presentano a *Quadrante*, pur molto dissimili fra loro, sono accomunati in questa […] direzione, che è solo apparentemente negativa e provocatoria, contenendo invece un impegno preciso'. Chiari, [untitled intervention], *Tecnologica*, w.p.

60 Antonio Bueno, 'A proposito di "Homo Technologicus"', *Dopotutto*, 1965 (monographic issue: *Inchiesta dell'avanguardia*), pp. 75–76.

61 'riapre il problema della divisione delle arti'. Giuseppe Chiari, '"Homo Technologicus"', *Dopotutto*, 1965, (monographic issue: *Inchiesta dell'avanguardia*), pp. 76–77: 76.

62 The chronicle of the violent and destructive action is given to us by Gianni Toti, 'E i benpensanti esplosero...', *Vie Nuove*, 46, 12 November 1964, pp. 80–83. I thank Lamberto Pignotti for making the document available to me.

63 'Al rapporto musica e tecnologia possono […] essere ascritti l'impiego delle nuove grafie musicali, l'abbandono degli strumenti istituzionalizzati dal concerto o il loro impiego anticonvenzionale, nonché la ricerca di nuovi tipi di spettacolo musicali aperti a contaminazioni con la prosa, la mimica, il cinema, ecc.'. I thank the Galleria "Frittelli" (Florence) for sending me the copy of the program.

64 Mauricio Kagel, 'Avant-garde and the academy', *Marcatre*, 11–13, 1964, pp. 114–115.

65 Eugenio Battisti, 'I tecnici del passato', and Piero Raffa, [intervention w.t.], *Marcatre*, 11–13, 1964, respectively pp. 115–118 and 129–130. The liveliness of the debate and the clash of positions are immediately emphasized in the chronicle of the conference in *La Nazione* of 30 June 1964: Sergio Frosali devotes ample space precisely to Raffa's intervention and underlines

his 'invito a recuperare *contro* Dorfles e altri un giudizio meglio fondato che non quelli affidati agli sbalzi dell'estro e a volte della moda [invitation to recover *against* Dorfles and others a better founded judgment than those entrusted to the surges of inspiration and sometimes of fashion]'. Sergio Frosali, 'Arte e Tecnologia nel mondo moderno', *La Nazione*, 30 June 1964, p. 10; italics mine.

66 'poesia, pittura e musica ballano sempre più assieme'. Lamberto Pignotti, 'Ecce musica', *Zeta. International Journal of Poetry and Research*, XLVI/2, November 2023, pp. 3–4: 4.

67 On the concept see Daniele Lombardi, *Augenmusik. Musica per occhi*, Firenze: Centro DI, 2001; on the author's poetics see *Daniele Lombardi. Ascoltare con gli occhi*, a cura di Gino Di Maggio, Milano: mudima, 2017.

68 On this distortion Lombardi, *Music*, pp. 81–82.

69 Lamberto Pignotti, 'La noia di Firenze', *Quindici*, 9, 15 March – 15 April 1963, p. 8.

70 See Renzo Cresti, 'Firenze e I suoi compositori', in: *Firenze e la musica italiana nella seconda metà del ventesimo secolo*, pp. 11–72: 19–20 and 25–26.

71 'Firenze è l'environment della noia. La noia cioè è voluta, è proprio una poetica. Tutta gente seria qui. […] A Firenze hanno sempre già visto tutto prima, non importa cosa. Organizzate convegni d'avanguardia, festival sperimentali, mostre di poesia visiva […]: quelli, i soliti e pochini, vengono lì, guardano e sbadigliano, sentono e sbadigliano. Se gli domandi qualcosa (in caso contrario stanno zitti) ti dicono, appunto, che sono cose già state fatte. Dagli americani, dai futuristi, dagli assiro-babilonesi… Magari ti capita di partecipare di persona o con le tue opere a mostre, avvenimenti, festival o convegni internazionali, ma per l'opinione pubblica fiorentina tu sei sempre un campione dell'avanguardia locale. In fin dei conti Firenze è una gradevole località di villeggiatura, almeno nelle mezze stagioni…'. Lamberto Pignotti, *La noia di Firenze* (the English term 'environment' is in the original text).

72 See Stefania Stefanelli, 'Il presente-futuro del Gruppo 70', in: *La poesia in immagine / L'immagine in poesia*, pp. 27–39; Stefanelli and Lucilla Saccà are also credited with some reconstructions of Florentine cultural life of the time that emphasize its richness (see also Lucilla Saccà, 'Firenze: storia di una rivoluzione colta', in: *La parola come immagine e come segno. Firenze: storia di una rivoluzione colta (1960–1980)*, a cura di Lucilla Saccà, Monsummano Terme: Pacini editore (exhibition catalog Monsummano, Mantova, La Spezia, 1999–2000), 1999, pp. 11–26.