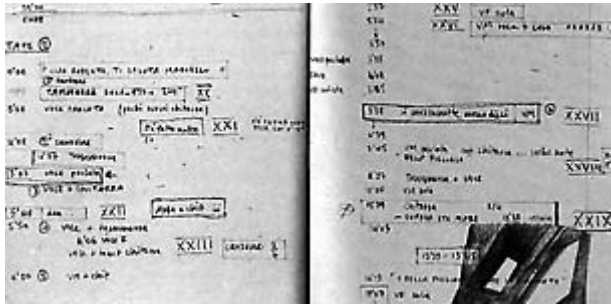


Napoli

Roberto Paci Dalò



"Reality is not a thing, but an aspect of the thing."
[James Rosen, *Mystique of the Contour*]

The acoustic secrets of the city at various times of day and night. Capturing the soundscape by means of a gradual approach. A journey into the memory of the city, as in a sound movie without pictures. Footsteps, shouts, songs and entreaties, printing presses, musical instruments. Parties on Vesuvius. Constantly-changing stratifications of picture and sound, intersected by the lightning of an acoustic storm that modifies the original source of perception. The microphone as a magnifying glass for enlarging details of otherwise inaudible acoustic fragments. Microhearing and macrohearing, keeping the features of each. Not a fusion, but an interplay of the materials. The listener plunges into the sound territory of the city in which daily acoustic life is so important. Not a picture of Naples, but the absence of a picture generates the desired astonishment. Plunging into the city through the secret of hearing.

The materials of which *NAPOLI* is composed have been collected in various parts of the city at various times. Many of the sounds and pictures are taken from the heart of the night.

Naples is an original city, and original too is the energy that pulses through it. Indolent, irritating, entrancing, bewildering. Naples is a kaleidoscope constantly in motion, for some an inferno peopled with angels, for others a paradise peopled with demons.

In this representation of Naples as a Dantesque cosmos, in which the applied standards of unwritten laws and conventions form a framework of action that cannot be grasped in any concrete form, Naples appears as a large stage penetrated by the hypothesis of extreme, at the same time multi-layered and compressed perceptions.

Taking this contradiction as its point of departure, *NAPOLI* consists of presences and absences, sketches an emptiness and permits this to be filled with expectations and shifts. *NAPOLI* falls like a curtain in front of the stage on which daily life is proceeding. There thus results a break between what remains behind, and what in front of the curtain; between what we also experience and what we do not learn. "Temporary closed".

A confusion of voices coming from afar and in a mysterious way intensifying the uninterrupted flow of speech. The sound of steps, so that one does not forget to keep on going, even when all discernment has already disappeared.

Rabbi Nachman from Brazlaw interprets the sentence "My whole life I grew up among Masters" in the following way: I grew up in nothing, a void, the void that separates and unites

the Masters. He defines divergence and separation as the origin of all positive values. This void between two positions is in a way political, since it is here that the refusal to close one's mind is the clearest. It is the place of anti-ideology pure and simple. The mutually contrasting and hostile perceptual perspectives form a dense tissue in which every viewpoint comes back, via its relation to the other viewpoints, to itself.

In the semi-darkness one is surrounded by sounds in motion. Flashes of light at determined intervals illuminate the surroundings for a moment, a fraction of a second. The duration and intensity of the flashes are rather intended to dazzle the viewer than to illuminate him. The light comes out of the darkness as a curtain between space and view. It encourages one to activate one's other senses, to supplement sight with glimpses of pictures, fragments composed of several different kinds of impressions. If one glimpse is not enough, the sum of the fragmentary glimpses can also not depict the whole. It is rather a question of describing a hypothesis of what is seen and a hypothesis of what is heard. This is why there are so many eyes in *NAPOLI*.

Hugely enlarged by memory, the eyes rest on the everyday.

Ex-voto eyes for supervising a fata morgana.

Ex-voto eyes for propitiating a miracle.

Miracle of appearances, glorious interface between reality and imagination.

A miniature theatre in which the bodies lie in shards, laid low by the absolute sin of southern sun.

Naked bodies, petrified between the flames of an eternally immovable inferno at the street-corners.

A theatre of hearing in which the acoustic action envelops the visitor and carries him to centre stage of a city exhibiting itself without ceasing.

A small neon votive chapel in which desperation is manifested in an icon and an invocation...

Digital heat, a physical bit in a [hypothetical] Elizabethan scene, in which the flesh invokes the soul.

A media dramaturgy on various levels — acoustic, visual, chronological, spatial — structured in voices.

As Patrizio Esposito says: "Naples is a city somebody is trying to throttle. Pale, cyanotic, breathless." Pierpaolo Pasolini, in a much-quoted, now almost threadbare passage, speaks of Naples as the last tribal seat of Europe. As a village that consciously puts up a hostile resistance to the fascination of the modern. It's a long, long time ago. If you stop a city breathing, the first visible damage is to its memory. And if you don't have a window from which to contemplate the past, you cannot permit yourself a future either. Here people all around are succumbing to the darkness...

Here in *NAPOLI* one can find the view on lost memory, on missing horizons, on the dizzying heights between the sea and the volcano.

In *NAPOLI*, nature and technology adulterate each other, and thus extend their limits.

The sound of the printing press generates a ground rhythm, as in the Middle Ages the tactus.

And once again the connection between machine, body, sound movements in space.

Territories strewn with electric cables.

Energy flows all around.

The landscape vibrates in an uninterrupted bourdon.

Instructions for mounting a media dramaturgy

NAPOLI is a highly theatrical installation, and the theatre is particularly well suited for thinking aloud.

Characteristic of the work of the last ten years has been a dramaturgical concept of space and the relations between objects, the acoustic environment and stories within my works. A strongly theatrical conception, characterised by the creation of an "artificial" space, in which similarities to the "real" world function as an initial access level, and which is filled out by the visitor/viewer in accordance with a typical hypertextual schema.

It can further be said that each project demands its own explicitly defined context. Certain processes can be better materialised in an installation [with round-the-clock access and individual experiencing], whereas other types of project have to be firmly anchored in time and space [such as a theatre or concert performance]. It is important to differentiate between the frequently very divergent requirements of the various projects.

In the theatre it is possible to develop works in real time, which links different modes of expression through superimposition rather than through [inter]mingling. In other words not "syntheses of the arts" but "part-artworks".

The realisation of contemporary works in several disciplines [in theatre and music just as in the media world of television, radio, publishing, Internet, and in the world of graphic arts, i.e. museums, galleries, public spaces] makes possible the installation of a unique artistic [and consequently socio-philosophical] project in various contexts, which comes about, among other things, through the anomalies of perception resulting from the constantly changing context. Several versions/translations of a non-original, each self-contained, but on account of a permanent perceptual confusion, yet a part of a superordinate whole, of a different possible setting of the everyday and customary.

All this can be described with one simple, entirely familiar expression: theatre.

An artistic practice which attempts on the basis of variation and elaboration to avoid the problem complex of recognisability, creativity at all costs, superimposed originality. It can be stated without any exaggeration: the future [and thus also the present] increasingly demands collaborative work, the artistic productions of groups rather than of individual artists. In the theatre this is long-established practice.

A distinction must however be drawn between theatre and theatre. Our theatre is a world view. A philosophy of quiet and expectation, an arena of elevated reflexion. A stronghold of philosophy.

Philosophy must take place in the body.

In fact no experience can take place outside of the body. The actor practises a philosophy that would otherwise remain pure theory, a wearisome spelling exercise, tied to the written word, unfree. The body becomes the object of confrontation. A fleeting interface between inner and outer. An open door.

With and in the body the spirits of the modern age collide with one another.

In the practice of theatre the body has always had its firm role as a place of separation and distance.

Vienna, Volksbühne, Pina Bausch, carnations, spring of 1993. Ultimately there is no room for praise. Perfect relationships with everyday microevents. Life on the stage becomes transcendent. Silent, controlled emotion is the only admissible comment.

The following materials are used in *NAPOLI*:

Voices from the market place, instruments and voices of the folk group E Zezi [Marcello Colasurdo, Massimo Mollo, Marzia del Giudice], Heidelberg printing presses, metals, water, motorcycles, footsteps. Installation and radio adaptation by ORF Kunstradio, Giardini Pensili Rimini, L'Alfabeto Urbano Napoli in collaboration with RAI Audiobox Rome. Issued as CD by L'Alfabeto Urbano/Giardini Pensili, also as part of the CD-ROM "Zeitgleich"

[Transit/Triton/ORF Kunstradio].