

Michelangelo Pistoletto

Specular Perimeter

I did not enter Salvatore Ala's gallery with pre-ordained plans.

The signs that characterises each space are indications of the work that may arise from my encounter with it.

These signs must also meet with the coordinates of the present time I am living.

Arriving in this space, the physiognomy of my current research has become fixed in those structural elements of the gallery that take the form of a cross.

One can use a sign solely to exploit its magical effect; to this end, one can indifferently use either the divine image of modern consumerism or the old cross, a symbol of death and exorcism.

I, on the other hand, by seeking communication through truth, reverse the direction of the signs of the transcendence of magic towards the understanding of the phenomenon.

Thus in my work the symbols adhere to the mirroring that they represent.

The cross that characterises the ceiling of Salvatore's great hall is the trace on which I can resolve my mirroring experiment. But it also indicates the co-presence of the fifth exhibition in the Turin Rooms.

In five, disparity is dominant even though it is achieved by the use of the double parity that formed the previous number, which is four. In fact everything in five refers to the single central point (odd) through which each point of the four lines passes to be reflected in the symmetrically opposite one.

My intervention in the Ala Gallery consists of placing myself in the centre, exactly under the point of intersection of the beams that end at the midpoint of the line that connects each of the four walls with the ceiling.

I run a mirror along the walls outlining the perimeter of the gallery and continuously photograph its movement, rotating the camera on the axis of the crucial centre I am in.

Each printed photograph takes the place the mirror had at each of its displacements. Thus in the exhibition all walls now reflect three points: first, the central point of the cross, second the mirror plane, third, the mirrored image.

But it is significant for number five to realise that only in four photographs is the photographer visible. These photographs are located, one on each wall, exactly below the points where the beams of the cross end their travel.

These four are the definition of the fifth image, the central one, which each of them used to reflect on the opposite wall. Thus you and I are in the centre of the cross.

This same effect can be felt as we enter the first room of the gallery. The mirror is positioned so that our entry into the interior space corresponds exactly with the exit of the same space, placing us in the centre of this phenomenon.

(text for the invitation to the exhibition Michelangelo Pistoletto, Galleria Salvatore Ala, Milan, 1976)