

Michelangelo Pistoletto

Division and multiplication of the mirror

1978

The gallery seemed to have taken on a different role. The staging of the elements presented was, perhaps, more fitting to a theatrical performance than to an exhibition.

This has never been mentioned and, perhaps, it's not necessary to mention it.

Objects appeared as works, but could have been tools. Or neither one nor the other. They composed themselves in space, without becoming an environment and without declaredly being a theatrical machine.

At 9 p.m. the public came onto the scene.

I was already there chiseling the surface of a table, hollowing it out to resemble a large plate. On the other side, an old work bench made the gallery look like a glass-worker's laboratory. So did the works. Made up of framed mirrors, they hung around and leaned, seemingly at random, against the walls. Some iron rings, attached to the walls, substituted all other objects, giving once again the idea of a somewhat vaguely defined laboratory. I won't describe now all the elements present that were on the scene, nor the different phases that followed one another during the exhibition month-long. It would take too much time and it would only satisfy the curiosity of those who look at the object or event, ignoring that which ties the objects to facts. My point was more a question of craft. It surrounded art like a frame. If art is life's mirror, then I am the mirror maker. I have become a magician: inside a mirror cut in two appeared as many mirrors as there are numbers, up to infinity. As the public entered the scene the opening's performance had already begun. The artist had become a craftsman again, to tell the fake of a real god who takes back his job left too long to a putative carpenter. In this fake he divides himself to create not one but two children, just like the two parts of a single mirror.

Each with the same reflexive capacity. And to the lady in the audience who said to me, "If you admit there is a God, you say 'does God exist?' and you answer 'Yes I do!' you admit there is a God. Who, then has given you these gifts? Who gives you the gift to create?" I answered "But I've said: Yes I do!"

When the lady began to speak it seemed that a magic spell had been broken, so the answer came from a plain reality. Reality was strangely represented the public, as by that which stands in front of a mirror. But the public had come to cast everything into make-believe, and so the dream began again.

I raised the trumpet and instead of sounds made words, which fixed themselves to the wall: "It is the hour of judgment." Terror wasn't readable on the audience's faces, because the audience was waiting for other trumpets of a very different kind, for another very different judgment. To calm them, however, I simply explained that it was time to wise up. Like good little boys and girls, they all giggled, which among other things meant "Ah, that's better". And so the hour of judgment began...

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