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The Challenge  
and the glimmer of living labour  
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1. “...just as, at twilight, as the sun is extinguished, rises the evening star which outlasts the night. Its glimmer, of course, is imparted by Venus. And upon the slightest such glimmer all hope rests; even the richest hope comes only from it.” Walter Benjamin

In a distant scene at nightfall I see the artist of the *labour of the past* appear. I recognise the *glimmer*. My voice comes back to me. Future time is not the time for those who flee. It is the time attached to the *tradition of the oppressed*, which is fulfilled. The artists of the *labour of the past* start at the dawn of modernity from a still unknown place of the soul. One has to move forward. The challenge continues.

2. My *refusal of abstract labour in art*, that has become a *profound refusal*, is an artistic gesture. That distant scene is now here. I see the artist of the *labour of the past* on his knees, bent over. I also see the worker of the *refusal of work* on her knees. As *Engonasin* she is bowed. This gesture draws a silhouette contorted itself in the good grace of horizontal lines, which trace an outline. It is the *position agenouillée* of the Greek artist, the hero of the *labour of the past* that opposes the final endurance. I bring this quivering news to Stockholm.

A hidden and weak messianic force follows *the position of refusal*. A position that suddenly turns backwards, reversing its place, imprinting the redemptive inversion. Sliding away in passing. The event happens before my eyes. What I see is a *living line*. This line of drawing has been reconciled. It is here, this one. The point of political encounter is an immediate passage, a gateway between past and present. The working class of *refusal* hands over the baton. This is the *glimmer*. Beyond words.

3. The century ends with the dominance of the industrial *plan* over *general and indifferent labour*. With its *modernist flatness* art shares the same destiny. *Abstract art and art in general* is without reference. It then

exceeds the same linguistic arbitrariness to transform itself into a total machine. The means for work in art at the end of the twentieth century, the medium, burns. An ultramodernist and *in general* machine of art, emerges with violence. It is a machine that produces the *something in general*. This *something* moves militarily against the artist. The apparatus of this machine produces the immaterial and the unnatural characteristics of the postfordist *worker*. The organic exchange between man and nature is scorched. Production remains a problem. If you don't maintain enduring resistance against this machine, and against its system, you loose, you loose a thousand times over. The huge factory of *something* is in the underworld of the world of goods and finance. Do you understand my problem now? The art that arises outside this system is negated. What is my life as an artist? Can the artist of *refusal* resist *something in general*?

The *condition of non-art* is the expression with which, at the end of the sixties, the *something in general* of modernism rejected such resistance with disdain. It did not realise though that this *condition* was not simple non-art. That condition, *persisted*, bringing a *particular being* into light, but also an *artist without anything*, a fighter and antagonist *in particular*. This artist started a fierce and partly secret struggle in art. This replaced the progress of the ontological messenger and opened up for the possibility of *living labour*. The *Torso* of subjective revolt that survived the mass worker and exceeded her own death.

4. At times of the destruction of visual meaning, well beyond the aesthetication of politics and the non-interrupted installation, art is the most advanced front of the neo-capitalist plan, the true laboratory of the management of dead labour. I can only see one form of *living labour*, that which is *extracted* from the bowels of the underworld of goods. *Living labour* is in *particular* and not *in general*. Capital can be defeated with labour, with *living labour* against *dead labour*. Fixed Capital burns but *dead labour* remains an enigma. Under the ashes, after the end of the centrality of workers, labour is still burning. In art, in the stump that survives, in its heroic sculptural figure, fighting labour, is active. But beware. The strategy of twentieth century Capital has always been to avoid direct confrontations with labour. It constantly has tried to turn labour aside, fragmenting and dispersing it. You should not loose yourself; you have to defend *living labour* in art at any costs. This is the place from where I depart again to meet the challenge. In the underworld

of neocapitalism the skies of the spirit have to fall. The artist with the *living line* guides the combat, liberates the gesture of *refusal*, redeems labour and transforms it into *living labour*. The flatness of ultramodernism passes by, flying at low level. The movement of the fighting artist is concrete. In this text her immateriality also searches for a *particular nature*. Thus *the condition of non-art*, after having been recovered, starts to produce meaning as *living labour*, becoming a possible subject for revolutionary thought.

According to Mario Tronti, “the problem is not to rebuild the workers movement but to become its heirs”. The artist of *refusal* should not fear to speak on behalf of the singular. The narrow gateway to the passage should be crossed swiftly.

5. Does the *living line* mark a political clash? Now, I’m in fighting mode. After *refusal*, is there an organisation of antagonism in art? Is it time to *organise* the sketch line? The *living line* is *living labour*. This line, which is neither found in nature nor in the sense of being known, comes from the *external*. It is an abstraction that moves in another nature, unknown to me. For the Russian revolutionaries, organisation had to be an abstraction capable of sustaining class-consciousness from an *external* position. They delineated the big problem. For Ernst Pfuhl the contour line in Greek drawing *is* abstraction.

Where is the living line drawn? Not in a space or on a surface *in general and indifferent*, but in a space and on the surface of labour *in particular*, on a surface *in particular*. This is where its existence should be organised. The battleground of *labour in particular* is in this textual description, the underworld of the plurality of subjectivities in labour, the factory of fragmented employment, labour *sans phrase*. This is the medium *in formation* on which this *living line* of drawing is *drawn*. A void *not in general*, in a nature *not in general*. My solitude reversed, *in particular*.

Beside this line there is the sentiment that protects and refines it, “*the fine and spiritual thing*” of which Benjamin speaks in the fourth *Thesis*. The living line of drawing and sentiment go together. The line is however an unknown and *obscure* spatiality. It is the search for *nature in particular*.

6. Alois Riegl has done valuable work on the future of perception and feelings. He warns of the dangers of controlling the space of perception. If you distance yourself from this recommendation, as for Othello, madness and unjust death will follow. Art in the moments of decadence and

inclination how lethal the separation of the senses without redemption might be. Touch searches desperately for sight. Riegl does everything in his power not to lose his grip. He realises that when spatiality escapes, distance might prove to be *obscure*. I can see that auratic distance, not as hostile but as redemptive. I can see it *at dusk when the evening star appears*. The sacred, distant aura of Benjamin is so, because it is *external*? The drawing line brings with it hope without limits. I realise that my gaze has changed. The *living line* is so external that it is far beyond the plane and the background. It is not *moved* by something, as it is not in nature *in general*. At Horta de Ebro in 1909 *distant* nature seemed for Picasso to be non visible, *obscure*. It was *in general*. Instead, the *living line* moves nature *in particular*. Is it possible to see it? Thirtieth of May twothousandthirteen

Translation by Michele Masucci