

Mirella Bentivoglio calls "Symbolic structures" the works which she builds or sets in the urban space. She has been active in this line since the mid – Seventies, when she constructed, within the framework of "Gubbio 76", an egg of stones which is still standing near the ancient doors of Gubbio, a most beautiful medioeval town of Central Italy.

The egg is a monument (with reference to the adultress stoned to death) and it is similar to the stony houses and the huge city walls which frame the rhomboidal square where the unexpected symbol gives away to a new relationship of signs, a new semiologic climat. For Bentivoglio's artistic biography Gubbio egg has been a turning point, a passage to an unusual urban scale and context, of a production between language and image which she has developed as a protagonist of concrete- visual poetry since the mid – Sixties.

"I started using the egg as a symbol in 71", reminds me Bentivoglio, "and have produced a lot of objects with an egg, and several collages with the photographic image of an egg. In 71 my objectual poem "ab ovo" dedicated to the alternative between nature and technology, proposed two "O" each containing an egg (on natural, polluted; one artificial, in transparent acrylic resin with a screw and a small wheel inside).

Since that moment I have started using that symbol related to other signs; the "O" from which it had been generated had become superfluous".

The present exhibition documents not only the big egg, but also the "E" - shaped symbolic structures which appeared as three – dimensional projects at the Venice Biennale in 1978 and have been situated in another open space of Gubbio in 1981.

At a graphic level the "E"s were born in 73. ("E" in Italian is not only a letter but also a grammatical conjunction; it means "and"; as well as "O", in Italian, means "or").

In 77 Bentivoglio started use "E"s in three dimensions; in 78 they assumed gigantic size, as proposals, to be inserted in the urban environment.

It is necessary to confront, in terms of semiologic declination, the difference between the two structures.

"The egg" tells Mirella "is life as individual destiny, solitude, birth and death, the natural law. The "E" is relationship, plurality, community. E-and are always many, egg-or is alone. Egg-or is "mater" origin totality; E-and is the interior result of an open, equal, dynamic connection between everything that is complementary".

The semiologic analysis of language enlarges itself in Bentivoglio's work into the visual dimension graphic writing, brought back through its alphabetic scansion to its primary ideographic matrix. But in the practice of the urban scene this analysis reaches further implications, for the chain of interrelated connections of these structures with the space in which they happen to be placed, and for the type of behaviouristic answer which they provoke, being situated in a concrete, public, every-day reality.

Enrico Crispolti, 1982