

Challenging Organisations and Society

reflective hybrids®

Beware of Art: ARTificial Intelligence Challenging Organizations and Society

Edited by Claudia Schnugg and Andrea Schueller

Claudia Schnugg, Andrea Schueller
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Paola Michela Mineo and Andrea Schueller in dialogue

Fragments as media of time

Andrea: Paola, we designed the performance for the Conference together¹ and are now zooming to reflect and carry its meaning forward. Fragments stand for disintegration and establishment of identity and also for traumatizing fragmentation in transitions, especially disruptive transitions such as the one we are currently experiencing. A fragment is both message and messenger. But there is another layer of meaning in your work which I would like everyone to be aware of. How do you understand fragments and what is their value in your artistic research?

Paola: From a cultural-historical point of view there is a massive bibliography related to the concept of fragments; the precise area that has most influenced my education is archaeology. I graduated in architecture from the Polytechnics of Milan and Athens, and since those years my love for Greek sculpture, which has reached our eyes in incomplete form, has become stronger and stronger, leading me to understand the fragment as a starting point for new meanings. I have also begun to rework body representation through the human plaster cast technique; I had already been passionately enthusiastic but I still considered fragments to be worthless, until I realized that I could not only use them as “copies” of bodies, sculptures or architectural structures, but also as a valuable element itself, as a medium of a story or a moment². The fragmented cast is for me the portrait of a human identity.

1 For more details see: Schueller, A.: *Fragments of the Future. Identity, Art and the Artificial* in this journal.

2 The plaster copies of Lord Elgin’s marbles, still exhibited at the British Museum in London after being taken from the Acropolis (1801-1812), played a fundamental role in all the European art academies in the spread of neoclassicism.
“The Echo of Marbles. The Parthenon in London: A New Canon of Classics” - Farinella Vincenzo; Panichi Silvia

Andrea: Why did you choose the human being as the main subject of your artistic research?

Paola: What attracts me incredibly, which then becomes my creative lever, is the exploration of the human soul. To do this, I practice empathy, I build the relationship with people to the point of contact with their bodies. The body it is the best Full-HD recorder for every single emotion and change; it is in my opinion the best device ever built in the world, the most powerful hard drive ever developed. We have cellular memory from conception to death. The body reveals the identity of people to me by bringing the inside out at the very moment creation happens.

Andrea: Creation happens before the very eyes of the beholder, who is both the person observing and the person being observed. The experience becomes relational, as do art and identification. The cast serves as protector and midwife for the identity in the state of becoming.

Let me highlight a subtle aspect I find crucial, having performed together with you: Through the suggestion to choose a part of one's face or body one might experience permission to feel whole and healed, and at the same time to be partial. Holding this paradox implicitly frees one from the need, internalized belief, habit, false sense of truth, or stolen images of beauty, of shaping the full form all at once. We leave an open space for fragility, imperfection, vulnerability, clumsiness, tenderness, craziness ... all the qualities which are often-times dismissed and thrown into the shadow part of ourselves, thereby adding to the collective shadow. We cannot dismiss these aspects of identity; they will show up and return to us in and from the most unexpected places or present themselves as apocalyptic fears. Uncertainty automatically calls these helpers on stage. In this sense, the fragment becomes the faculty of forming the new version of us which needs to breathe into a holding space where it can be seen and recognized with open, loving eyes. This can be a relationship, a community and of course one's body sensed and, if you will, seen from within. That's why we invited the people to identify with their fragment and took pictures of

their face with the fragment while asking them to let a word come from the felt sense of their momentary being, which is connecting image and cognition.

Paola: Yes, exactly. Over the years of my research I have come to understand how people were pleasantly shocked by their own three-dimensional form, seen from another point of view. The example of our voice makes it clearer: we are used to hearing ourselves “from within” our body. When we listen to the recorded voice “from outside” it is very different. When we take a part of our body off with a cast, as happened in the performance with the fragment of the mask, we have a different perception. This experience also works when I guide people to create it on themselves, which I have experimented with in my workshops for four years. People, in the dimension we have experienced together, become the artists, the models and the audience itself.

Andrea: Let’s talk about how we fit our work into this delicate socio-historical moment. Especially to you and also more generally: what is the role of an artist and contemporary art in these times?

Paola: I am a relational artist and I use the performing arts as a visual language: in my long creative process, space, body, time and audience are integral parts of the work, just as pencils, brushes, paints, canvas or carpet pad are frames for a painter. Since the dawn of time the artist has been an active and representative witness of his own time, and I believe that multi-disciplinary languages like mine are suitable in this complex, multi-layered, super-fragmented society. I would like to share Barbara Boninsegna’s thought (Artistic Director of Centrale Fies) to explain this:

“We think that a process that brings one closer to performance art is also a way of developing critical thinking, a non-conventional perspective, a multiplicity of viewpoints. Because contemporary arts have always been not simply a blueprint for the future, able to describe society with its collective imagination, its obsessions, fears, needs, desire, injustices and struggles, but

they have also, and most importantly, revealed its autonomous narratives, which are diversified and complex as compared with the mainstream narrative flow imposed by a particular historical era. We have to provide different instruments, stir up reflections by opening doors that are not accessible in everyday life and that lie outside official, mainstream narratives, make ourselves documents for tomorrow of what we are today.”

Andrea: If we consider the role of artists and art particularly in the lockdown, we have all witnessed the contradiction between words and deeds of governments when it comes to allocation of resources related to the stipulated vital necessity of art for human life: artists were one of the last groups to be given financial help; other industries came first. Nevertheless, artists found ways to go on and share their ways of creating and touching people in these difficult moments. How did you manage to go on with life and art on a more personal level?

Paola: Art for an artist is not only a job, so “the show must go on”, always! At this moment in history, we are all deprived of the physical relationship, and empathy training is becoming more and more complex digitally. But my artistic approach has been developed in various fields in the last four years, from schools to purely cultural activities (museum – corporate activities), so I think I could play an important role on various levels in the near future, when all of us will have to be “re-educated to contact”. That’s why we worked together to understand how my research can connect with other professionals like you who work in fields other than art but integrate art as a valuable practice to achieve important goals.

Andrea: Through artistic interventions I carry out in different fields I invite the whole person, with the whole brain, to sense, interact and express while facing uncertainty and complex challenges, with the aim of creating or learning something fresh and meaningful. Artistic interventions catalyze and carry unholdable qualities, emotions, tensions and players. People can

and would easily get stuck or lost in one truth or brain. Secondly, the creators identify with the piece they produce in one way or the other. It is their creation. The artefact is or can serve as the representation of the solution they are looking for: the next step, the new vision, a new blossom of consciousness on the edge of being embodied or simply trash they throw away because now they can see, sense, feel and touch it because they have gone through the experience, as we did in Linz. So, for me digital and virtual workspaces offer a lot but also enhance the need to engage the other senses and to invite people, for example, to a Zoom or other type of online meeting. Use the flat screen but don't become one. We need to counterbalance the fragmenting forces of digital communication by daring ourselves into the virtual space with all our senses and allow all the above mentioned to happen in the oftentimes seemingly "clean" and flawless technical world. I see the need to share experiences at the workplace and take it from there. The truth is, machines are not flawless, we might project this on them. Ask any technician.

Paola: Fragment for the Future was born in August 2019 and was a fluid four-handed design. When you look at it now, it really seems like a premonition of what was going to happen from February onwards.

Andrea: Yes, due to the engraved image of having a white fragment, a mask on the face, and all of a sudden, we are wearing MMM masks in everyday life and the Sharp Eyes of the collective knock on our doors. Since then we have been walking the fine line between protection and surveillance.

Paola: Yes, wearing the mask, being numbered, listening to the artificial, authoritarian voices³, sensing their impact, staying with oneself and the external challenge was a training session for the soul: dichotomy between human

³ The negative, authoritarian voice was part of a soundtrack we used in the performance. Its purpose was to spray the shadow of power and technology into the atmosphere: its abuse. See also Schueller, A.: Fragments of the Future. Identity, Art and the Artificial.

and artificial, between visible and invisible, protection and revelation, inside and outside, intimate and collective. I believe our intention to make people think critically about everything and particularly about the importance of becoming aware of our true and solid human identity has been perceived.

Andrea: I didn't know, but I fully trusted the arrow would land somewhere. I know for sure that I needed to perform, whether anybody liked it or not, made sense of it or not, in this exact way. Dedication to my truth freed me and the freedom deepened my dedication. I think this is the best I can give to the world and to myself, an attitude which is best expressed in the words of Carl Rogers: The most personal is the most general. When the personal story clicks with the human quest, you have two options: follow the call or fall back into sleep or cynicism. The human quest is open 24/7, not only now.

The click happened when I got inspired with the idea for the conference project. My colleagues said GO for it and all of sudden I had forgotten all of it: NO. I noticed I had crossed the threshold as a person refusing the call. Yet, the felt sense of it had stayed. From that position of refusal with the YES, I dug deeper into the topic of AI and digitization. Facing a lot of resistance, with many head- and heartaches, due to new, interesting, overwhelming content to deal with, I continued on my learning journey, something like: I chose the project, but I didn't choose digital transformation and AI to confuse my life. Good, I didn't walk alone, a simple and again profound truth provided one can accept it. Through our connection, your work and readiness to expand into something new, the empty, creative space was back and enlivened me. The tech-learning became more interesting and meaningful and I got a taste of why and how art and artificial can join and live inside and between. And so our future evolved. Looking back, I have learned a lot and left with inner clarity and ease.

Paola: In the performance we exchanged the mask to enhance empathy and to elevate each other. Now it would be dangerous but, paradoxically, wearing

the mask we protect the other. So the Covid 19 can serve as a wonderful empathy lesson. perhaps the “I” dimension is over and we are all moving together towards the direction of the “we”.

Andrea: Imagine, if we would change our breathing masks – we could kill each other... and we will die anyway. And yes, exchanging our masks was a powerful moment. We called each other into existence then, fully, and carried each other forward in fresh ways. I recall the poignancy of this moment.

Paola: I want to be seen – I want to be invisible. I see you.

Andrea: Do you remember, our last words in the performance: Stay with your gold. I would like to unfold our purpose and the meaning of the gold in the performance and in the context of culture and consciousness development.

Paola: The most ancient civilizations already had an extraordinary mastery of the art of gilding. In the history of art, the value of this “treatment” has always been purely decorative, adding preciousness and light. I have always been fascinated by gold leaves. Fragile extracts of a powerful solid mineral whose value has never been questioned for millennia in the most varied civilizations of the world. When, in the course of my research, I discovered that people are surprisingly “better”. I wanted to add this symbolism, especially when it is not me who makes the cast but when I guide people to it, as in Fragments of the future. When I open the gold leaves box and ask people to look for their point of maximum beauty, it is always a very exciting moment. We are often bewildered to express our beauty with such a strong and synthetic gesture. The awareness of our beauty, as sense of value, strength and balance, is one of the key points of my relational research, which, as I was saying, is expressed through a visual language – as well as strongly sensory, of course.

Andrea: I loved you bringing it in! Gold is the hook for our un-conscious to lift our submerged greatness and unlimited creative potential, which Carl

Jung called the Golden Shadow. We can discover our Golden Shadow in intense admiration of other people, mostly with those we fall in love but also with gurus, politicians, artists, technicians, robots, machines... So far, when we spoke of shadow and identity, we focused more on the dark, shameful aspects of ourselves that we have disowned. The gold is the symbol reminding the super-senses to bring home our greatest light, which we also might disown. Both shadows may – could, should find entrance in the cracks of our faces, minds and hearts. That's the work. In this time where people lack security of who they are and what to do they tend to feel either too weak or too small or too strong or too big it is so important to resist the temptation to see all the good and shiny in the others, leaders, technology, external authorities as well as all the bad and horrible. Let's see each other with dark spots and gold and help each other on the way.

Paola: Hey, partner, an image says more than ...

Andrea: Words? Ok a mask then. Did the new collection arrive in Italy?



Fig. 1 Andrea No. 33-6



Paola: Yes sure, obviously I have a lot of masks!



Fig. 3 Andrea & Paola

*the self
as truth perception
of masked and unmasked layers
challenged by
protective devices
and deadly objects, we become and refuse.
revealing time as own pace of becoming
human identity*



PLAY NOW

Fig. 4 Soundtrack

Next New Action

(3d)

*Assess your creative
potential for leadership
and consulting*

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* choose one – or more (optional)

*Craft your ideas and
developments and bring
them into the world. Act!*

Group in collective flow

(5d)

*Deep dive generative group
dynamics*

Flow peer group

(3 x 1d)

*Your homebase for
orientation, integration &
individual learning*

COS Conference active participation

(2,5d)

*Engage on stage, show
your intention and action
for organisations & society*

Integrating somatic

intelligence in high

performance teams

(4d)

*Awaken somatic intelligence
for generative change*

Whole System:

**Co-Creating new structures
for collaboration**

(2,5d)

*Futuring, working with large
groups and networks for
transformational change*

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Join COS, a Home for Reflective Hybrids

The future is an unknown garment that invites us to weave our lives into it. How these garments will fit, cover, colour, connect and suit us lies in our (collective) hands. Many garments from the past have become too tight, too grey, too something...and the call for new shapes and textures is acknowledged by many. Yet changing clothes leaves one naked, half dressed in between. Let's connect in this creative, vulnerable space and cut, weave and stitch together.

Our target group is reflective hybrids – leaders, scientists, consultants, and researchers from all over the world who dare to be and act complex. Multi-layered topics require multidimensional approaches that are, on the one hand, interdisciplinary and, on the other hand, linked to theory and practice, making the various truths and perspectives mutually useful.

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