

Giordano Bruno's Process, installation at IILA, Roma

Thursday morning in Campo di Fiore that wicked Dominican friar from Nola (...with his tongue gagged, for the horrible words he said) was burnt alive, of whom it was written in the past: obstinate heretic, and of his caprice he formed various dogmas against our faith, and in particular against the Holy Virgin and Saints, he wanted obstinately to die with these the sinner; and he said that he died a martyr and willingly, and that his soul would ascend with the smoke to paradise.

But now he will see if he was telling the truth.

"Notice" Rome, 19 February 1600

An installation by Tania Bruguera at the IILA

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The work of Tania Bruguera, interdisciplinary artist and politician, is marked by the experience of the other, an experience that can be artistic, historical or political.

In this project that is being realized at the Museo Laboratorio of the Università Sapienza, Rome, and at the Galleria dell'Istituto Italo-Latino Americano, the chosen subject is Giordano Bruno.

Giordano Bruno was a man of the late Renaissance, savant of the arts of memory and the *ars combinatoria*, theory of the plurality of worlds and the infinite nature of the universe. A Dominican, he was forced to leave Naples as a result of his doubts on the doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation. In 1576 he began a life of travels, Geneva, Toulouse, Paris (where he enjoyed the favour of Henry III), or rather pilgrimages, during which he supported himself by giving lessons in geometry, astronomy, mnemonics and philosophy. In spite of being a Dominican, for a while he embraced Calvinism.

After having to leave Paris for his disputes with the university environment, tied to Aristotelian traditions, he moved to Germany, where he taught in Marburg, Wittemberg and Frankfurt.

Summoned by Giovanni Mocenigo, he travelled to Venice to teach the art of memory. Bruno would return to the Peninsula after an almost ten year absence and in 1592 he was handed to the Inquisition by Mocenigo himself.

The principle inspiration for Bruno's philosophy was liberty. Bruno believed in a deep and personal responsibility: man master of his own fate, conscious centre of his own world, he recognized the greatness and meaning of nature. In cosmology he perceived the greatness of the physical universe, understanding its immensity, its endless forms, its expansion without barriers and the infinite nature of the universe. In astronomy he perceived the heliocentric system: infinite are the suns and infinite are the earths. Bruno's affirmations proclaimed pantheism (God and the world are the same thing) and as a good Platonist he believed that the world was one great leaving being, ultimately, the only living being.



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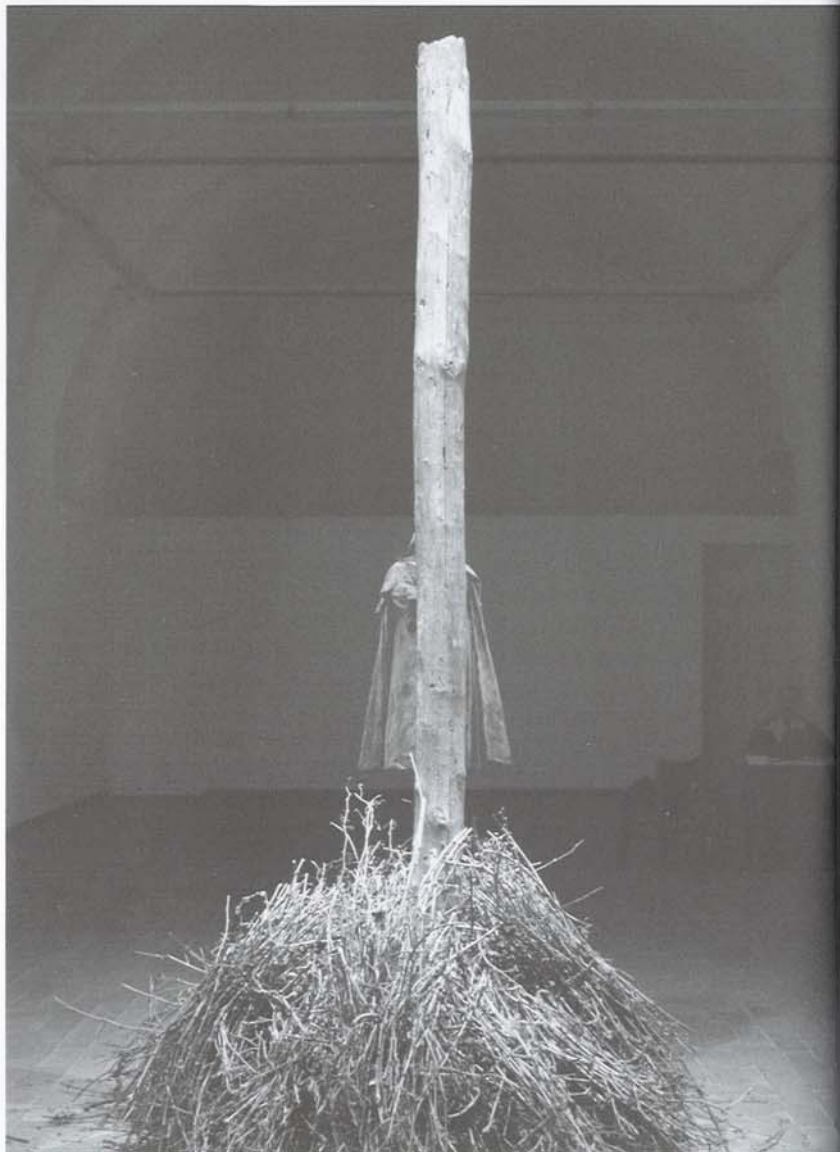


He was accused of doubting the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ and Transubstantiation, and wanting to substitute particular religions with the religion of reason as unique and universal religion, as well as affirming that the world is eternal and that there exist infinite worlds.

He was killed because he saw things differently to many. The prohibition of expression at his time was such that when they brought him to the stake they gagged him to stop him speaking (according to the notice) "for the horrible words he said".

This life, full of ideas, realizations and doubts, inspired Tania Bruguera to retrial the man from Nola. The trial of Giordano Bruno takes place with a series of events over the course of a year, which will culminate in the presentation of the processes for his canonization.

Venice, Padova and Rome, are the first settings in which Bruguera enters into action to create what is ultimately her response to history, her artwork.



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The Galleria dell'Istituto Italo-Latino Americano is located a few meters from Campo de' Fiori. The idea was that of taking possession of the space of the Campo and transporting it, along with the event that we relive, inside the gallery.

In living this installation we have a physical and psychological experience. The first sensation that we feel is that of being in the centre of a large square. Entering, we find ourselves in front of the stake that rises, illuminated, in the centre of the dark and empty room, in front of a large photograph of the controversial sculpture of Bruno¹, and evocative writings on the surrounding walls. A gloomy, motionless and meditative figure, Bruno, concentrating on time, seems to look at his absent self on his instrument of torture.

In front of this installation the spectator feels the experience of the martyr. All possible questions of religion, peace, justice, liberty and power overlap.

Once again, Bruguera manages to reproduce historical processes and circumstances, analyzing power and the ways in which it manifests itself within a society that, generally, collaborates. A metaphor, an evocation presented as a creative process (this time without a performance, one of the artist's preferred forms of expression). Tania Bruguera brings herself once again close to the experience of someone else's life and death, drawing references from her own memory to elaborate a test of the unknown/intuition.

The surrender and sacrifice that exists in this ascetic installation constitute the *raison d'être* of Bruguera's art. In reality, the real function of the artistic in her work can be found in the bridge between life and death, between liberty and frivolity, between forgetfulness and memory².

The artist herself defines her work as an answer to her surroundings, where the personal and intimate are moulded with the collective and social, trying to create works in which the boundary between reality and art disappears.

Once again the pragmatic functions as an allegory in this wonderful work of the reconstruction of memory. Here the spectators are the reflection of her artwork, and this whole space of guilt, responsibility, silence and sacrifice concerns them.

1. Going against the opinion of the Pope and the Church the monument, the work of Ettore Ferrari, was inaugurated on the 9th June 1889. Ferrari would be elected grand master of the Freemasons in 1904.

2. See: Juan Antonio Molina, *Entre la ida y el regreso. La experiencia del otro en la memoria*, solo catalog, 23 Bienal de São Paulo, 1996.