

Primeglio, 4/12/2014

Friends,

Thanks to thoughts and contributions published in recent years on the site [www.artedecrescita.it](http://www.artedecrescita.it), we have come to the conclusion that the time is ripe to begin to elaborate a real antidote to the "new is better" ideology, according to which every innovation is *de facto* an improvement. The main stream has given art the task of exploring the most advanced borders of modernity, chasing ceaselessly the new, which, like a rainbow, becomes more distant step after step because there is always something "more new" lying in wait for the new; a "more new" whose appearance constantly transforms the new into the old.

In our opinion, in order to awaken humanity from this spell, which is relentlessly destroying the cultural differences, the biodiversity, the beauty and the planetary balance which allowed the growth of the human race, we need to free art in all its forms from the chains of innovation as an end to itself. Therefore we feel that it is necessary to retrieve the concept of art as a creative activity aiming to do good, to the measure and to the harmony, and adding beauty to the original beauty of the world; to overcome the limits of space and time which bind the human condition. Art, as Egon Schiele wrote on his prison wall, is not modern: art is eternal.

Following this conviction, we think it would be useful to organize a two day seminar from the afternoon of the 29th to the afternoon of the 31st of May at the convent of the Benedictine Sisters of Santa Marta, in via Santa Marta, 7 – 50139 Firenze – tel. 055 489089. Full board and lodging costs 65 euros per day in single rooms with en suite bathroom, 55 euros per person in double room with en suite bathroom, 45 euros per person in rooms without bathroom. As availability is limited to sixty places please book directly with one of the signees of this mail. Instructions on how to pay the deposit will be given once you have booked.

In order to prepare for the dead line, we would ask every recipient of this letter, and also those who receive it in unfathomable ways like a message in a bottle, to offer according to each ones skills (philosophy, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, history of art, literature photography, cinema, poetry) a written contribution on which to build a useful and productive debate. In order to be included in the preparations, contributors should send their texts by the end of March.

You will find in attachment the *Manifesto For a possible Renaissance*, which will be the theme for the seminar.

Hoping this will meet your support and interest, our best wishes

Maurizio Pallante  
[maur.pallante@gmail.com](mailto:maur.pallante@gmail.com)

Alessandro Pertosa  
[a.pertosa@libero.it](mailto:a.pertosa@libero.it)

Vincent Cheynet  
[vincent@cheynet.net](mailto:vincent@cheynet.net)

## For a possible Renaissance

What is it that allows the annual production of commodities to grow, increasing the consumption of natural resources and energy, polluting emissions, green house gas emissions and waste? Technological innovations aimed at increasing productivity. Innovative machinery which over a period of time allows to produce more and more whilst reducing the incidence of human labour on added cost.

What is it that continues to reduce the time span natural resources spend as commodities before becoming waste? Technological innovations and restyling aimed at rendering products obsolete in order to speed up the process of substitution.

And what makes us continually design technologically and aesthetically innovative products simply to render them obsolete and transform them into waste as quickly as possible? The need to keep demand for commodities high and to absorb the growing supply of commodities due to technological innovation which boosts productivity.

Innovations of production and product make up the physiology of the economic system aimed at increasing the production of commodities. Without innovations of production, it would be impossible to increase the offer of commodities. Without innovations of the product, the demand for commodities couldn't increase. Innovations of production and product are depleting the stock of non-renewable resources and have increased the consumption of renewable resources to the point of overtaking their annual regeneration; they are the cause of the greenhouse effect; they are emptying the oceans of many fish species and filling it up with plastic waste the size of a continent; they are saturated the biosphere with poisonous substances, destroyed in few years the beauty of a landscape which was slowly formed over centuries, it has they have reduced biodiversity and mineralized farmlands, increased hunger all over the world and caused wars in the last century which are ever more atrocious and bloody. Innovations aimed at increasing production and consumerism of commodities are threatening the very survival of mankind.

Since economic systems aimed at increasing commodities need innovations they also need to culturally enhance innovation itself. The corner stone of culture on which the collective imagination is modeled is the identification between the concepts of innovation and improvement. In their cultural paradigm, every innovation is an improvement, without innovation there is no improvement; history is a constant progress towards the best; the steps towards this progress are marked by a series of innovations and its speed is the speed with which the new innovation takes the place of the previous one.

The cultural enhancement of the innovation for its own sake leads us to imagine the future as a casket of endless potential for improvement on which we must concentrate all our attention and think of the past as a warehouse of permanently unusable material needing to be forgotten as quickly as possible, always looking ahead like a sailor in the crow's nest of a galleon trying to be the first to see novelties on the horizon, never looking back, because if we linger to look at what was once, we risk losing our place in the race towards the new and we will end up like Orpheus, who turning to see if Eurydice was still following him in the difficult anabasis from the beyond, lost her forever.

In the cultural enhancement of innovation, the arts have been given the task of exploring the farthest boundaries of modernity; namely chasing ceaselessly the new which moves further away on the horizon as step by step one tries to get closer. Because there is always something newer lying in

wait: something newer ready to transform the new into old and in its turn waiting to become old as something newer is breathing down its neck. In economic systems aimed at increasing the production of commodities, art in all its forms (painting, sculpture, music, poetry, architecture) has been kicked out of its eternal universal dimension and ended up confined within the ephemeral dimensions. It has been forced to be innovative in order to be contemporary, to release the new from its tight embrace with economic and productive activity which responds to the economic system aimed at growth, to cancel from the collective memory the perception of its destructive role and to take it to that spiritual dimension, not enmeshed in the daily miseries of life, where in the course of history human beings are used to placing artistic events.

To awaken humanity from this spell which is destroying itself, we need to free ourselves from the culture which binds us to the enhancement of innovation; enhancement imposed by the economic and productive systems aimed at the growth of the production of commodities.

Alongside and in tune with those who propose freeing economic and productive activity from the chains of innovation aimed at growth, we propose freeing all artistic expressions from the chains of enhancing culturally innovation, which has made such a strong contribution to the collective imagination which considers progress the reduction of work to a «do to do more and more». To return to the essence of doing well aimed at the contemplation of what has been done, we need to redefine a system of values whereby beauty becomes more important than profit, because how can we contemplate what has been done, if we do not add beauty to the original beauty of the world?

To transform the foundations of the cultural paradigm which is dominant nowadays, we need to rebuild a collective imagination capable not only of exposing and ridiculing without fear, the four tricks of the huckster with which contemporary art pursues the cultural enhancement of innovation, but also to recognize the signs of art which penetrate the very soul of humanity, overcoming the boundaries of space and time; creating, as it always did, before becoming entangled in the web of modernity, an uninterrupted thread between generations. Because art, as Egon Schiele wrote on his prison walls, is not modern. Art is eternal.

Gabriella Arduino, architect and painter  
Vincent Cheynet, chief editor of La Décroissance  
Pier Paolo Dal Monte, doctor and philosopher  
Massimo De Maio, graphic designer and ecologist  
Filippo La Porta, essayist and literary critic  
Giordano Mancini, master of arts, green manager  
Maurizio Pallante, essayist  
Alessandro Pertosa, researcher in philosophy  
Mario Pisani, architect  
Paolo Portoghesi, architect  
Giannozzo Pucci, publisher  
Bruno Ricca, publisher  
Lucilio Santoni, author  
Filippo Schillaci, essayist