

The dark sides of culture

Barbara Kruger, in one of her famous artworks affirms: When I hear the word culture, I take out my checkbook. This provocation well evokes a wide range of associations related to culture: theatres, music performances, artworks, and so on.

Another well-known quote says: “Whenever I hear of culture, I release the safety on my Browning”. This quote, misattributed to various Nazi leaders, is included in a Hanns Johst play “Schlageter”.

Following recent interpretations, with this statement, the author well describes a common feeling related to what “Kultur” (the word used in the original play) represented during the '20s and the '30s in Germany.

In German, in fact, the word Kultur refers to what we could define as “high culture” in contemporary interpretation. This kind of culture was a privilege of the coeval elites. Kultur was often “a way of legitimizing the preferences of one group, and delegitimizing the preferences of another”.

On closer inspection, these quotes have much in common: in both cases the word “culture” induces a reaction, and in both cases the “reaction” is in some way “violent”.

The difference between the two interpretations is just in the weapon that Kruger (checkbook) or Josht (Browning) use.

Both the quotes could be used to illustrate this number of Tafter Journal. In a “poetical” interpretation, this number of Tafter Journal is dedicated to Cultural Losers.

On one hand, Muttillo explores the “invisible art” or better said, the complex of artworks that, for several reasons are permanently stored in museum storage and are “not subject of exhibition”. With her article, the author illustrates critical aspects related to this topic while proposing possible action to improve the current conditions.

On the other hand, far from the silence of the storages of the museums, the article of Longo analyses, with a sociological perspective, the evolution of the conflict raised about the construction of the TAP (Trans Adriatic Pipeline), an enormous project aiming at delivering natural gas from the Azerbaijan to Europe.

Against the TAP, and more precisely, against the construction of the gas terminal in a historical olive grove, and versus the choice to locate the Italian terminal of the pipeline under the pristine beach of San Foca, a local movement raised protest during last years.

This leads us to another characteristic that both the articles have in common: the relationship between culture and territory.

This relationship emerges strongly in the case of the No-TAP movement: in fighting the construction of the pipeline terminal, the movement intends to preserve cultural and natural heritage. In the case of the “invisible art”, instead, this relationship is one of the main causes justifying the ineffective organization of the storage within the museums system.

Logistically, the construction of central storage centers, differentiated for materials and for eras, could be a more effective solution. The choice to locate the artworks in Local Museums Storage Centers is partly due to the will to preserve the relationship with the territory they belong.

This number do not lead to a solution. It only represents and underlines that, often, there is more than one point of view. It just remind us that, despite our common belief, there are conflicts in which, the preservation of Cultural and Natural Heritage is definetely the only way to follow while, in other, could also not to be the best choice.



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