

Endurance

By Papo Colo, 2001

Endurance Manifesto

Life is not art, but art is an exaggeration. Performance is a commitment to tell a story by any means necessary. And your body is a natural choice. Easy access, with your mind the inseparable witness of the will. Marking time with your body. Expose your body and the ideas will flow. Show your anxieties with the interlocking of the flesh.

These two things--the body and the mind together--create a challenge that has no limits. These performances are symptoms and demonstrations of what the artists wants--to exercise their own power--beginning with themselves.

Self-portraits transmitting the impossible. Showing that things are done if you put yourself on the line. No other medium is more convincing than risking your own self for what you believe. How resistant is your spirit when you focus on physical endurance? How long can you take it? How high is the impact? How extended is the after-effect of those actions? For every action is a reaction.

The endurance of the body is an extension of the mind. When pain grows, the mind expands. The physical becomes philosophical. These amazing physical actions are universal answers: from dada to surrealism, from religious penitence to political torture, from personal fantasy to the artist as a sufferer, or the ultimate innocent sacrifice for the society.

Endurance is the extreme form of presence, an emphatic statement of existence, time, and the physical limitations of the body and will. Within some of these performances/actions is an intention to go beyond the physical to reach the spiritual--rituals of the modern world, a way for the artists to prove a point to themselves, a defiance of being your own victim, an action between triumph and defeat. Visual art becomes a form of acting, the meaning changes from the visual to the physical and finally to photography which is the final act/object.

Every intention of the artist is to represent beyond the society that he or she is born into and these endurance pieces help to give meaning to those intentions and illustrate the collectivity of an individual. Masquerading as physical, primitive actions, they are part of a sophisticated, delicate discourse. A reality that you can read into any religion. For example: fasting, punishing yourself, silence, monastic life. We can say that these pieces are the ultimate expressions about believing in god. You can read it as seeing art as the inconceivable. As the transcendental action that will cure some of the sins of art. The sins of art-- decoration, pretension, pleasure, beauty--are transformed into a more visceral and eschatological domain. A space where the ordinary becomes unexpected and the visual becomes a text. Most of these pieces become oral histories. For example: one artist shoots himself, another spends one year in a cage, and still another cuts into her skin. You don't have to see these actions to imagine the art. They become symbolic images of a collective memory. A material of legends that becomes different stories as they move from person to person.

A masochistic line of work that ritualizes the common logic of everyday incidents into an exaggeration. And the will of the artist's persona to capture that instant of amazement and impossibility to question the truth and promote the unreal. Easy and difficult to watch raises a kind

of morbid curiosity in the public. Some people dislike it, but for others it arouses their sexuality and curiosity. These performance/actions can create a collective hysteria of fear and pleasure. Such extreme exposure of the body and discovery of inner strength can reach the point of an extraordinary moment of spirituality. There is an inner competition with the self, when the artist plans a triumph with a premeditated act of defeat. We the public contemplate these unusual impulses of control, and we never know who wins, the artist or the ideas that become visual poems.

There are many performances in this book and you can trace them with the tip of your finger when you place it on your wrist and feel the pulse -- blood flowing into your veins. They are all there.