

CRISTINA GIUDICE

CONTEMPORARY ART AS A VISUAL EXPRESSION OF POWER

My article is about contemporary art. For a number of decades the research about the connections between art and geography has grown and has allowed to expand the critical approach on the contemporaneity¹. My intention is to focalize on a specific aspect, that is the relationship between cartography and contemporary art in relation to the discursive practices of power.

My research began from the reflection on the fact that maps are expressions of power, instruments through which states built themselves: «maps are artifacts that constructed the state, that literally helped to bring the state into being», as Denis Wood said in 2010 (Wood, 2010, p. 32). In some works of contemporary artists I shall discuss here, the map is a visual expression about the discursive practices of power: these works put on the stage with the different instruments of the visual, the mechanism which connects the geographical representation and power politics and make the construction of the symbolic visible.

I shall suggest a critical reading which always originated from the artists' intentions; of course the choice of the works of art is personal (and is obviously limited) to show that there is a *fil rouge* among the artists about their consciousness to react to the reality around them. For this reason the use of maps is fundamental, because they are means created by human beings to “build the world”, while the artists create their works for mapping the world. Another common point is that maps concern all of us as art does, but in a different way. Maps are used as “neutral” instruments while art is perceived by everybody in a different way, because art involves our body with the senses, our sensibility and our experiences. For this art can become an instrument to deconstruct the mechanism of power, in such a way to make them visible and sharable among the emotional participation of the observer.

Now I shall analyze a work of Maja Bajevic, *Dressed up*, a performance made in 1999. She was born in Sarajevo in 1967. In 1991 she received a

¹ For example I refer to Tedeschi, 2011.

scholarship to study in Paris where she planned to stay for eight months, but stayed eight years, because of the war in former Yugoslavia. In 1992 she celebrated her 25th birthday while her native city of Sarajevo was besieged. For a number of years it proved impossible for her to return to Sarajevo. Her life as a student became a life in exile, even though, officially, she wasn't a refugee. Living in a diaspora meant that questions of identity acquired a special urgency. Bajevic's experience of exile has become an important source for her art. From 1997 she began travelling between Paris and Sarajevo and her work acquired new social, political, and psychological substance. One of her early performances from that period is *Dressed Up* (1999): she used fabric she had printed with the map of former Yugoslavia to cut out and sew together a new dress, highlighting the intimate, everyday nature of something as tragic and seemingly impersonal as the disintegration of a country. As she said:

Tragedies like war and the disintegration of a country are usually seen as political, general things. Actually they are personal, very intimate events in our lives that we carry, pasted on, like a dress. I have printed on fabric the map of former Yugoslavia. I sewed, in the city gallery, over a period of seven hours, a dress for myself out of that fabric. I finished the dress during the opening of the exhibition and changed into the newly made dress (Bajevic, 2002, p. 6).

Bajevic shows us war and its consequences from an unusual point of view, making us a witness in first person. The map of ex-Yugoslavia is cut and sewed to take the form of her body, just as the wars provoked by political will, socioeconomic and religious interests, have cut and sewed the country at the price of thousands of dead and terrible suffering. The dress, which at a first glance seems a simple garment to cover and protect the body, suddenly becomes a symbol of a tragedy, set in the heart of Europe, but removed as a foreign body and so forgotten. The performance obliges the observers to enter inside that history, with their own body and to feel the empathy with it.

The act of Bajevic is very significant for me, because it shows as an artist, which uses a map, revealing the mechanism of power. In fact Bajevic who transforms a map into a dress, puts on the stage what has been done in reality in that country represented in the map: the shifting between the representation and the reality is used in a double way by the artist, because she prints the map (that is a representation) on the fabric

and then she cuts that fabric to make a dress for herself, as the war did in her country. The dress is the visualization of the effects of the war, which had divided and put together in a different way the former Yugoslavia, following a model and logics of power, external and foreign to the majority of the people, as that dress is made to fit the body of the artist. I underline the word body of the artist, because the wars and their consequences first of all weigh down on the single person and on their real life.

And so the work of Bajevic puts into discussion the power of hegemonic discourse: the map has become a form of decoration for a dress, as in the reality the former state was destroyed.

The discussion about the concept of representation of a map has already been discussed by numerous scholars and here I only want to underline it. Bajevic with her performance put on the stage this debate and in a ludic way she amplified, or better still, she multiplied as in a trick of mirrors. The map printed on the fabric is at the first glance a simple decoration, but during the performance, it becomes what actually is, a map. A map which is a representation of a territory and of a nation, the former Yugoslavia. But that representation transforms itself into the visualization of what happened in that country and in so doing, it assumes another meaning. At the end of the performance the artist puts on the dress, which is by now, only a dress with a strange decoration. But every person who participated or watched the performance does not see it as a simple dress, but it has become the representation of the tragedy of the war.

In this way Bajevic has used the map first, as a simple representation, but also as an instrument of exercise of the power of politics, that has cut out and put together the dress-territory, as if it were a printed fabric, according to the hegemonic practices. I think that art can be useful to understand our world because art is an instrument which constructs something real; and in this way art can help us to deconstruct those mechanisms.

Another artist uses maps in her works, Mona Hatoum. She was born in Beirut in 1952 to Palestinian parents who were living in exile in Lebanon because of the war in their homeland. She moved to London where she studied in Art School, but in 1975 she could not return to Beirut, because of the civil war. So Great Britain became her second adopted country.

Her personal history is very important for the creation of her works. The displacement from her home and the sense of uprooting due to her

Palestinian origin, without a homeland, is mirrored in her need to create cartographies: Hatoum seems the incarnation of that nomadic subject in becoming, embodied, situated and eager to draw cartographies for moving and living, as Rosi Braidotti argued (Braidotti, 1994). The philosopher said that the nomadic subject, recognizing the positive value of “the difference” (starting from the sexual difference), is a multiple and sexualized subject, multicultural and layered, coherent and mobile at the same time, open to new displacements and able to continuously form interconnections to resolve conflicts. This subject again redefines his/her collocation and so draws cartographies of his/her history and of his/her way of being in the present, and takes up an ethical and responsible position. I think it is interesting to interpret the works of art of Hatoum with the eye of the critical and feminist thought of Braidotti, because this helps us to understand better with a wider vision on the contemporary debate. «A cartography is a theoretically based and politically informed reading of the process of power relations» (Braidotti, 2011, p. 15).

Map (1998) is a cartographic representation of the world made with an enormous number of glass marbles arranged skilfully on the floor. We can clearly distinguish the natural geographic outlines of continents, but not the political borders, defined by history and human actions, disappearing in the uniformity of the material. The work is very fascinating to observe, also because glass marbles recall to our memory children’s games. But here there are important concepts of Nation and border with which we are immediately thrown into a context of conflicts and power relationships. The visitors with their movements around the work will modify its appearance, rolling the marbles toward an inevitable state of drift that emblematically undoes the boundaries. Hatoum seems to tell us that we live in a changing world, and everyone must be ready to change. On the other hand *Map* is an ironic comment of the artist on how the geopolitical demarcations and divisions sometimes condition people’s lives in a very heavy-handed way. Hatoum described it as «so unstable that even the geographical delineation of the continents cannot be fixed, since the simple movement of those walking across the floor will shift parts of it and threaten to destroy it»².

Map is of course, a work about borders, the construction of nations and so, national identity, but it is also a reflection about the map (as the title suggests): what does a map represent and in which way does it do it? Hatoum creates with the glass marble a map which we know very well,

² www.artdaily.org Palestinian Artist Mona Hatoum at MOCA LA.

but it is very big, it is in an unusual position (on the floor), it is made as a puzzle, a game where everything is in its position. In this way we realize only after taking a longer look that it is the representation of the world, the “real one” and not only a game or an art work. The map is at our feet, we can change it, because the glass marbles can roll, but we do not do it: *Map* is perfect. In reality maps are made by cartographers, human beings, and do not show the reality but what he/she wants to show and to hide. Hatoum reveals our presumed neutrality in making maps, but also in interpreting them.

By the way at this point I think it is important to refer to *Bukhara*, a series of works, created in different periods of time. They are Persian carpets that seem at first glance, worn out in some parts. A closer look reveals that the seemingly random patches come together to form an atlas of the world. But Hatoum uses the Arno Peter’s world map (and not the Mercatore) which depicts the continents in a different proportion and corrects the distortion of the traditional maps that show an enlarged Western Europe and North America. In this way the artist first wants to make us aware of the idea that the maps are constructed; second that they are not neutral representations of the world, because there is always a point of view from which we look at the world and consequently, we act. As Braidotti argued the nomadic subject is conscious of being situated and of acting according to an ethic of responsibility.

In the same way *Bukhara* invites us to look at the world from a precise point of view, conscious of our position and of the role we want to cover.

The choice of the projection of Peter is an evident way to underline our responsibility: of observers of the art work, because if we do not pay attention, we do not see it; and of human beings, knowledgeable and responsible subjects, in both good and bad. Of course that representation is the mirror of that sense of superiority which characterizes the Western culture and which has been visualized during many centuries in maps, with surfaces which are much more expanded than in reality. This image is so rooted in our minds that, with great difficulty do we realize the different projection used by Hatoum for representing the world. This is for me a very significant sign of the importance of the visual code, able to persuade us (in this case about our superiority), and of the strength of the repetition, according to the theorizations of Judith Butler³. She, referring to the way with which the body and the sexuality are discursively

³ She theorized it for the first time in 1990 and in 1993.

made, underlines how the discursive strategies of exclusion work with semantic shifting: the norm is confused with the normality and what is normal becomes then natural. This process is guaranteed by the continuous iteration of the norm, which must be continuously confirmed. This iteration disseminates however the possibility of transforming the norm itself, changing even only a small part of it. The analysis of Butler seem to me very pertinent to understand and to read with a different eye the works of Hatoum and her will to modify our habit in interpreting the world. Her choice of using the projection of Peter obliges us to take consciousness of our position in the world and maybe it leads us to revise it.

I want to underline another paradox in *Bukhara*: looking at the carpet we notice first of all, the geometric decoration and we consider the erased part is defective: however in a traditional map this defective part is the most important. Hatoum turns our perception upside down considering what is full and what is empty and the difference between land and sea, creating a short circuit of meaning. Once more Hatoum reminds me of Braidotti and the figuration of nomadic subjects, characterized by a multiplied identity, plural, not univocal, discontinuous but unitary, which is able to think about change in a constructive way. «Figurations are not figurative ways of thinking, but rather more materialistic mappings of situated, embedded and embodied positions. They derive from the feminist method of the “politics of location” and build it into a discursive strategy» (Braidotti, 2011, p. 24).

As I have already written, for Hatoum her personal history is very important and in particular the Palestinian identity is felt very strongly; in many works she talks about Palestine and one is *Present Tense (1996)*, an installation made by many bars of olive oil soap, a typical product of Nablus, with red glass beads embedded into the bars. The beads make up the representation of the map of the territorial divisions arrived at under the Oslo agreement in 1993: it is like a map made of soap. This work was presented for the first time in 1996 in a gallery in East Jerusalem (the Arab part of the town), during the first journey of the artist in Palestine. The first impression of the work is the smell, which reminds us of a traditional product well known there and the red beads seem like a decoration. Of course the meaning is clear, even from the title, *Present Tense*. The artist said: «It is about the situation as it was then.[..] I used soap because of its transient nature. In fact one visitor asked: Did you draw the map on soap because when it dissolved we won't have any of these stupid borders?» (Rogoff, 2000, p. 88).

With this work Hatoum wants to involve us with our body, because the first impression of *Present Tense* is the sense of smell. That perfume reminds us of something about the care of the body, about the cleanliness, that is something very personal and intimate. Also the red glass beads recall to our mind something pleasant as a game or a necklace. In this way the artist puts us in a good mood and so we are very surprised to discover the real meaning of such a pleasing work. We are displaced and forced to situate ourselves in this new context of war, discrimination, violence and suffering of many real people: the involvement of our body with the perfume of the soap immediately transforms also “the others” in real bodies like us; in so doing we can understand with our body what it means to be in that terrible situation, also if only for a minute. Hatoum was able to show us how maps are abstract representations, but about something real. The friction between the sensation of home provoked by the smell of soap and by the sight of the beads, and the political meaning of that material and of that drawing, represents a characteristic of the works of Hatoum, who wants to shake us, starting from our little certainties which often become dangerous habits of thought.

In the same way there is *Hot Spot*: it is a big globe made of stainless steel and neon tubes (which is 2.34 m in diameter) which makes up the form of the continents. The work seems weightless, because it is empty and the red light gives it an impression of something pleasant and known. But it is dangerous to go near it, because it is very hot. The sense of displacement and a feeling of fear makes us careful and a little bothered: the artist has put in front of us the situation of our world with reference to the danger and the fear of many human beings. Again a reminder to the personal and ethical responsibility of each of us, who is not only an observer in an art exhibition, but also a human being and a conscious citizen. With *Hot Spot*, the artist reminds us of our vulnerability and precariousness, a common characteristic of human beings and also the importance of trying to understand what we are looking at, as when we look at a map. «[...]to move toward the recognition of a generalized condition of precariousness. It cannot be that the other is destructible while I am not; nor vice versa. It can only be that life, conceived as precarious life, is a generalized condition» (Butler, 2009, p. 48).

The vulnerability and the precariousness are arguments felt and investigated by the artist many times. For example *3D Cities* is an installation (2008-2009) composed of three simple trestles in wood with a printed map placed on each of them. They appear very colorful and seem to be

ruined in some parts. The maps are showing three cities, Beirut, Baghdad and Kabul and they are deliberately chosen for the connections with war and destruction. In fact the thing that the three cities have in common, is that they were theatres of recent violence and later, the reconstruction. Hatoum puts on the stage these two aspects, by creating three dimensional shapes which are raised or lowered in the maps. So at first glance what could seem to be a characteristic of a new map, becomes a sign of the war. Hatoum first transforms a traditional bi-dimensional representation into a tri-dimensional one, but only in chosen zones. For this our perception is changed and we have to adapt our standard point of view to this new perspective. In addition the modifications of the maps are very pleasant, because they look like works of origami. With this work the artist transfers the idea of vulnerability and precariousness from the paper of the map, which is cut in different parts, to the reality of the represented places: the three cities have been damaged by bombs and by fighting just like Hatoum “damages” their representation.

Zarina Hashmi was born in 1937 in Aligarh, India. Her family was Muslim, but chose to stay in India following the partition of 1947. In 1959 her parents decided to migrate to Pakistan, where she never felt at home. So she travelled around and in the 70s she stopped in United States, where she now lives. *Atlas of my world*, made in 2001 is a series of six woodcuts with Urdu text, her mother tongue, printed in black on handmade Indian paper. With these maps Zarina talks about herself, they are the way she knows herself, her identity. She said:

Migration was not a choice I made; it was forced upon me, a consequence of history. I have always seen my identity as part tradition and part language. Geography and studying maps are the preoccupation of a traveller. I have always wanted to know where I am and how far I have travelled on the road I traced for myself (Hoffman and Pedrosa, 2011, pp. 200-201).

On these maps the artist wrote the ancient and traditional names because she wants to «restore the cultural identity of places and situate them in a historical timeframe» (Ibidem, p. 201). In fact the writings are in Urdu, the mother tongue of the artist, who was displaced in many different countries, but who has chosen to use that particular language to identify herself. Every map is a personal map, because of the choice of what it describes, but also because of the Urdu language. For example the map of India shows several thick black lines which are the known

borders: however there is a particular line which divides India and Pakistan and continues south into the Indian ocean and off the map and north into China. This is the sign of the personal border of the artist, which is even more than the actual borders, because they were experienced by Hashmi herself.

Zarina's maps are very personal descriptions of places even if they have many references to historical and real events which concern everybody. I called this work of Hashmi "personal maps", because they are a reflection about the way in which maps are drawn: they reflect the point of view of a person and they are never neutral.

The phrase invented in the 70's by Italian feminist groups "personal is political", it is for me useful to understand this work much better: because what involves the story of each of us has an effect on the community and of course on the politics in its wider meaning. The personal history of Hashmi which has signed her life, is indissolubly connected to the political history of her country: for her it is impossible to talk about herself without talking of history in general. Furthermore the same identity of the artist is connected to places where during many years, have changed politically and have conditioned the perception. India has become for the artist a foreign country from which she was obliged to break away, also for the religion. The choice of representing "my world" is significant, because it indicates that those maps represent her world, that is herself, in contrast to the idea that a map is the world of everybody in the same way.

Hashmi talks about an atlas, that is a book which collects many different maps, and so it is the idea of collecting different places: and so they are a complete cartography, but completed only for the artist, not for all the people. As Braidotti argues, the cartography which the nomadic subject draws, is always retrospective, characterized by fluidity, and changeable maps of tracks, precise maps, but drawn only after living an experience in that zone, to describe places where we are no longer because we have moved on. *The Atlas* of Hashmi is really this, a cartography with the traces of her own experiences, that is the way to exist as a subject. It is also important the use of the Urdu language, the mother tongue which defines our belonging to a history and to a culture, in addition to a person in flesh and bone. The language is what gives us the life in the society, what defines and forms us just like the maternal body which gives birth. Hashmi connects language and images to give much more strength to that genealogy inside which she lives.

Also the installation of Hank Willis Thomas refers to known events, but relived from a personal point of view. He was born in Plainfield, USA, in 1976 and he is an African-American. “*A Place to Call Home (Africa-America)*” made in 2009, is a strange continent, because it is made by connecting two continents and by substituting South America with Africa. The artist refers, of course, to the history of slavery, to his distant African origins, which mark him in the colour of the skin and discriminate him. His works are usually about this argument, about the struggle for the civil rights in the 60s and the present reflection about the whiteness, an apparent natural colour that continues to provoke pain and suffering. His installation of this “new” continent is a visual representation of this history which is also the story of the individual identity of the artist.

This work reminds us of the reflection of Judith Butler about the value of the iteration. In fact we only see the deliberate “mistake” if we pay closer attention, because our minds are programmed to see what we are used to seeing. It is well known that when we are in front of something new we try to assimilate it to something known and in this way the recognition happens. Only with a great effort we accept the novelty until it becomes “normal” and so absolutely known. It is the same mechanism with which the western culture has built its system of values: only what is recognized by sight exists. The eye becomes the privileged organ and defines the field of the reality, about everything which is around us. In a second moment the language, the logos, names, give a name to the things and in this way confirms their existence. If we argue that language has a performative power, the work of Thomas is a real short circuit, because it obliges the observer to deconstruct a known shape, connected to an “official” story. The history which connects Africa and North America suddenly appears to us in a new light, where we occupy a privileged place to the detriment of millions of people, forced to be slaves. The will of the artist is able to get our false conscience to come out, with a simple shifting of an image. The African American, today a widespread and politically correct definition, returns to its intimate meaning which involves the tragedy of many human beings. This definition of the artist is transformed in a deeper way by the use of the word “home”, which is something common to everybody. Or better still, from our point of view, we believe that it is like this. But are we sure that everybody is able to call home the place where they live, if they think about their history? The removal is a process which involves not only the single person, but it can be a mechanism with which a nation and the national identity is

built and easily accepted by everyone who is inside. The work of Thomas is a way to make our intimate conscience awaken with a forgotten history which speaks about discrimination, violence and uprooting. The words build the reality and to define a person on the grounds of the colour of the skin has been a form of violence, which has been perpetrated for many centuries. The need of home is considered for the human beings a primary necessity, even if in many cases, the forced departure has been used as a weapon to subdue the enemy.

The work of Thomas demonstrates the political value of maps and their strength as an expression of power. At the same time however, the map can become a subversive mechanism to deconstructing the established order which appears as “normal”.

A different kind of work of art with maps is made by Elena Damiani. She was born in Lima, Perù, in 1979 and now lives in Copenhagen, Denmark. *The Victory Atlas* is a series of collages, made in 2013 and it was exhibited in Venice Biennale in 2015. They are maps taken from the *British Atlas* of 1920, published by Geographia, over which the artist has stuck images of landscapes. In this way Damiani creates an emotional map, where the reality and its representation shift from one into the other. It is like a narration with different tones: the title of the map is the first indication, then the images about that argument and at the end, the map of the region. However the whole composition is very homogeneous and every single part shifts easily into the others, creating a pleasant image. The artist is able to provoke in the observer a deep emotion due to memories, experiences or dreams about those places described, because everyone is more than a simple map: the photograph allows us to visualize immediately the region, taking us closer to and in a way inside that place. On the other hand every work is characterized by geometrical shapes, which are very clear at first glance. In this way Damiani refers to the tradition of Western art, which uses geometry as the essential element. So every single collage mixes geometrical shapes with pictures of landscapes, while in the background the maps are seen indistinctly. Our glance is attracted because it recognizes the single parts, but it cannot understand the whole meaning. But if we look at all the collages, we understand the meaning and we can read these as a very complete map, also if it is very personal and if each one of us can give a different meaning.

It is like a stratification, which is an argument of the research of the artist, who usually reflects on the earth, memory, the succession of civilizations, destruction and fragmentation. *The Victory Atlas* is made up of

discovered maps and this is a sign of the traces of memory which are part of each of us. Damiani with the action of using discovered objects, especially books, pictures and maps, puts on the stage the idea of the importance of history and tradition, which are in front of us, but usually we are not able to see. This stratification of different periods, very similar to the stratification of the planet earth, is visualized by the technique of the collage, that is a stratification of paper and pictures. Of course this is another way of showing how maps are full of meanings, if we are able to recognize them; and also another way to show how maps are instruments constructed by human beings not for describing the world in a neutral way, but from a precise point of view, which can change in time and space, but also in the interpretation of every individual observer.

The maps created by Damiani want to involve our sensibility and emotions, because they are «subjective illustrations of the world as a mental place»⁴.

The last artist I shall analyze is Tiffany Chung. She creates another kind of emotional map, but more political. She was born in Danang, Vietnam, in 1969 and lives between her country and United States. In the Venice Biennale in 2015, she exhibited the *Syrian Project*: this composition is made up of 24 small coloured paintings of different dimensions, which seem like representations of flowers. They are painted on parchment and paper with very beautiful colours, as a composed landscape of flowers. However if we look at them carefully we can recognize the real meaning, which is terrible. In fact Chung describes the Syrian conflict, with this project which began in 2011. The maps tell the story of that country from the period of the colonization, in particularly from 1916, when there was the agreement Sykes-Picot between Great Britain and France, until the recent war. Chung analyzes the present, starting from the idea that the colonization has had an important role in the history of the country, as she knows well about her country, Vietnam. In fact the artist often refers in her artistic works to the trauma lived by her and her family and, more in general, by the Vietnamese population.

In the *Syrian Project* every map describes a particular situation, visualized by the coloured decoration on the parchment and explained in the title. In particular the artist describes statistics about war casualties, children killed in the fighting, internally displaced persons, refugee camps: every painting corresponds to one of these statistics with the map of the region and the coloured zones about the item; however it is very difficult

⁴ www.elenadamiani.com

to see the map, because it is drawn with very light lines, while the coloured zones are very vivid. Besides the observer is captured by the different colours of the paintings, because everyone has a different tonal base. The dimensions of the picture are also different, some are bigger than others and some are placed vertically and some are placed horizontally. It seems that the artist wants to attract our attention, but she knows that we are not so interested in problems and tragedies: so she uses the beauty to attract our glance and at that moment we are obliged to look carefully at the paintings and to understand their meaning. In such a particular way the artist focuses her attention on the numbers of victims and refugees, obliged to leave their own country. I think that this way of using maps is very poetic, but also very strong, because of their beauty.

Another characteristic is use of parchment, a recall to the ancient tradition, with the miniature: in some way Chung seems to recall the preciousness of that technique with the vivid colours and the collection of small coloured dots, which are however, the visualization of living persons. The precision of the technique corresponds to the precision of the statistics used and illustrated by the artist. *Syrian Project* is a very pleasant work to the eye, but very serious for the content.

I also want to underline the ability of the artist to give the idea of fragility and vulnerability with the lightness of these coloured compositions, which remind us of the lightness of flowers. But this is also the vulnerability of the human beings represented by those coloured dots.

All the artists I have talked about in this article use maps in their artistic works, even if in a different way and with different meanings. However I think that the choice of using maps is due to the idea that with them it is possible to deconstruct in many different ways an hegemonic discourse of the power.

I would like to remind you of the poem by Wislawa Szymborska entitled *The Map* (Szymborska, 2012, pp. 43-45) where she describes maps as something changeable and constructed, so small that we can touch an entire continent with our hand; but it is important for the poet not to forget that those maps are representations of something which is real and living. In the same way the artists who I have presented want with their works about maps, to involve the observers with their emotions. With this, we can understand better, because we experience it, with our own body, that every map is a representation, but each map is made up of real lives.

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Contemporary Art as a Visual Expression of Power. – My paper is about contemporary art. If maps are expressions of power, some works of art correspond in the same way. My research tries to examine through the representation, in which way politics and national identities are built.

In some works of Maja Bajevic, Mona Hatoum, Zarina Hashmi the use of the map is a visual expression about the discursive practices of power: these works put on the stage with the different instruments of the visual, the mechanism which connects the geographical representation and power politics and make the construction of the symbolic visible.

Art permits us to discuss in a critical way, how experiences and representations are part of the complex process in becoming, in time and in space, constructed by hegemonic and contra-hegemonic discourse. For me contemporary art allows to analyze the relationship between the different kinds of representations and the construction of power.

Arte contemporanea come espressione visuale del potere. – Il mio articolo riguarda l'arte contemporanea. Partendo dal presupposto che le carte geografiche siano espressione di potere e strumenti per costruire le identità politiche e nazionali, la mia ricerca esamina lavori artistici che, in qualche modo vi corrispondono.

Analizzerò tra gli altri, alcuni lavori di Maja Bajevic, Mona Hatoum, Zarina Hashmi, in cui l'uso della mappa è espressione visuale delle pratiche discorsive del potere: questi lavori mettono in scena con diversi strumenti, il meccanismo che unisce rappresentazione geografica e potere politico, rendendo visibile la costruzione del simbolico.

L'arte permette di discutere in modo critico quanto le esperienze e le rappresentazioni siano parte del complesso processo in divenire, nel tempo e nello spazio, costruito dal discorso egemonico e anti egemonico. L'arte contemporanea diventa per me strumento di analisi della relazione tra diversi tipi di rappresentazione e la costruzione del potere.

Keywords. – cartography, identity, representation

Accademia Albertina di Belle Arti, Torino
cri.giudice@accademialbertina.torino.it