

INTERNATIONAL GLASS PRIZE

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THE PROCESS

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CONCEPT

THE PROCESS

The universality of the process (by Dan Holsbeek)



Richard Long, *Dusty Boots Line, Sahara* (1988)

Time is an almost incomprehensible phenomenon and is irrefutably linked to man's existential quest. Is time a linear or cyclical movement? Is time a succession of 'now moments' or is it a continuous stream? These are but a few of the many questions that are frequently asked. It is generally believed that time only exists in the material world and also that there is a cohesion between time and change in the form of movements, events, processes, etc. Philosophers like Heraclitus and Henri Bergson present it as duration, as a permanent stream. That this is not just a philosophical interpretation is evidenced by the fact that it is postulated that the creative process is not an event but a continuous 'becoming', often in religious circles too.

This perpetual flow has the qualities of a kaleidoscope and, like it, takes many different approaches. Whether we are talking about moving, becoming, developing, growing, evolving, mutating, transforming, expiring or degenerating, or so many other possibilities... within a changeable context these are all usable words, but there are nuances and recognition is likewise varied. Do not 'expired' and 'lapsed' provoke more of the idea of something that is coming to an end and isn't the perception of growing and evolving more positively charged than changing and transforming. And if we assume a positive appreciation, for example of the word evolution, isn't this appreciation very relative? Doesn't it seem a little cynical to talk of the evolution of man when we look around us and see how he treats nature and his fellow man?

On the one hand there are changes that occur outside man – which sometimes have no direct sensually perceptible consequences for his kind and at other times have an inescapable and final impact – and on the other hand there are changes that are caused by man himself – whether consciously or unconsciously. When he deliberately sets things in motion, we can assume he does so for a purpose. For motives which of course can be either positive or negative.

An important part of human action is aimed at cultivating his 'environment'. And here too the word need not have an unambiguously positive meaning. In essence, the word cultivate is not a synonym for 'raising something to a higher level'. It actually means that man is going to leave his mark on his natural environment; that he is going to manipulate it. And he does this to his heart's content as the renowned curator and museum director Jan Debbaut once wrote: 'We have created a new, surrogate nature, where each tree is planted, every river is forced into an artificial bed, and animals are bred biogenetically.' We would probably find it difficult to separate the positive connotation surrounding the word cultivate from unquenchable human pride. Man, who sets himself above nature, to which he is connected. Man, who attempts to make his environment tailor-made to suit himself, which is cultivating ... the creation of an environment that is 'liveable' for him', through functionality, comfort, beauty, etc.

And this is where the meaning of craftsman, designer, artist and other creative people takes shape. They participate in that seemingly inevitable and imperative process. The last word is not chosen randomly here, it refers to things that change and also externalises a hint of neutrality. Indeed, a process can also refer to both evolution and de generation, and moreover, in the context of this exhibition, is not unimportant because the word is also often associated with 'creation' and 'the creative'. The creation process and the creative process ... these appear to be different ways of saying the same thing and yet they are distinct. The creation process lays more emphasis on the process (of making), while the creative process alludes to the artistic spark that occurs and is depicted. In this sense, the observability of the creation process and the creative process is also on another level.



Marinus Boezem, 'Gothic Growing Project' (1987)

Based on the approach taken, the creative process also generally gives the impression of being less visible than the creation process. You don't have to be an expert to understand how 'Bicycle Wheel' by Marcel Duchamp came about or how his 'Fountain' found its way into the exhibition area, but it is not easy for the spectator to understand how he came up with this idea. Indeed, the distinction between the creation process and the creative process can be found in specialist literature when one takes a closer look at different stages of the creative process, and suggests that, starting out from the problem and the subsequent 'theorisation' of the problem, one generally finds a creative solution by way of the 'aha moment' postulated by Karl Bühler. Moreover, in the same literature, we are told that even the practical realisation of the solution is considered to be a part of the creative process, but at the same time the following is added: 'without this stage being considered in the strict sense as a part of the creative process.'

The significance and impact of this 'aha moment' on the result will of course differ radically, depending on the complexity of the medium used. For example, the distance to be covered between the intuition that led Beethoven to his fateful motif and the final 'Fifth Symphony' would have been many times greater than the distance *Picasso* had to travel in 1942 when he came upon the idea of using the combination of bicycle handlebars and ditto saddle to produce a symbol of the Spanish national spirit: *The 'Bull's Head'*. That 'aha-experience' is not unique to the artist, but he is expected to have greater potential regarding such experiences. If this recurrent quality is not present, then the work is often rather pityingly dismissed as coincidental and the artist is then referred to as a 'flash in the pan'.

As already suggested, the creative process is experienced as a more concrete event, but nevertheless it remains a complex process and it is difficult to talk of clarity, even if we keep the preceding creative process outside the creation process. Within this context therefore, one cannot present a complete picture of all the facets of the process concerned, and we opt for a number of approaches that externalise the complexity. The chosen approaches relate to the viewpoint of the artist, the work of art and the viewer.



Picasso, De stierenkop (1943)



Jackson Pollock (1912 - 1956)

The fact that the artist is the engine and the vehicle of the creative process seems obvious to many people, but ultimately, all things considered this is not really so self-evident. The dynamic and total involvement of *Jackson Pollock* in the production process contrasts sharply with the painting factory of the American Mark Kostabi, who limits himself to the final control of what his designers and painters have put on this world to the honour and glory of Kostabi himself. Between these extremes there are of course many intermediate forms, as is evident from the – sufficiently well - known – interaction between Rubens and his extended studio. Furthermore, we note that, especially in the world of industrial design, the creation process is often a shared responsibility, because the design and implementation process sometimes assume very different qualities and technical and material requirements.

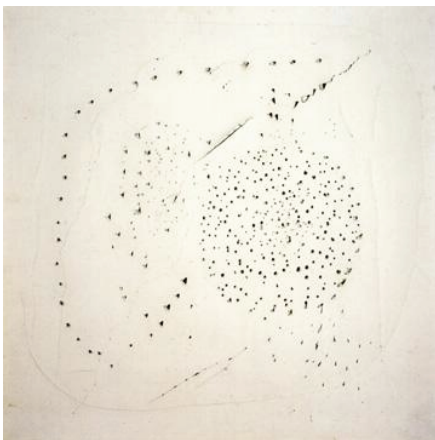
Also on the level of the significance of the work of art itself, the creation process again plays a major role. A couple approaches which, as well as many others, are fairly important, are the driving force and the interconnectedness of process and meaning that may or may not be linked to this. The dominant view is that the artist controls the process, but as we saw in the previous passage, this act need not be absolute. However, in what follows, we are concerned not so much with the presence of employees, but with the process itself and again with its significance for interpretation.

What can set a process in motion is sometimes very diverse and cannot always be completely controlled. Materials and all kinds of physical and chemical processes can lead to unexpected results. For instance, Keiko Hasegawa, the Japanese ceramist who is known for her Raku pottery, does not have absolute control of her colours and patterns, and *Valie Export*, who, in 1968, was unable to estimate what the consequences would be when, in the context of her *'Tapp-und Tastkino'*, she went out into the streets so men could touch her breasts. Apart from this aforementioned inherent unpredictability, there are works of art which are permanently developing or images where the process itself has become the subject of the work. In this case, process and meaning merge together. As far as these last two approaches are concerned, think for example of *Marinus Boezem's 'Gothic Growing Project'* a 'green cathedral' consisting of 176 poplar trees that will continually grow and change, and of Robert Smithson's landscape interventions in which he showcases his interest in entropy. Indeed, to this we can add almost all the arts whose presentation is associated with a time lag, as in 'Performance Art' and certainly in 'Land Art' when it is expressed in the way *Richard Long* does. Such artistic interventions undoubtedly emphasise the significance of the process. We also found examples where the viewer is made aware, through the image, of technical processes and the specifics that are consistent with them, in the first 'International Glass Prize' relating to the work of Maria Bang Espersen and Elisabeth Oertel.



Valie Export, Tapp - und Tastkino (1968)

Finally, with regard to the viewer, there is not only his possible involvement, but also the readability of the creative process. This may also vary widely. For example, it is clear that the creation process of a *'Concetto spaziale'* by *Lucio Fontana* is much more readable than the creation process of a vase by *Emile Gallé*. And it is equally clear that a knowledge or the visibility of the creative process can contribute to a different appreciation of the work.



Lucio Fontana, Concetto Spaziale (1949)



Emile Gallé (1846 - 1904), Nouveau art, Cameo Glass

Through its inclusiveness, 'the process' is multiple and rich, often complex and cannot always be understood, which makes it so rewarding for the artist. Indeed, isn't his role analogous to that of the philosopher and scientist, namely a never-ending quest for the essence of things? And when the creative process and the creative process are placed side by side, we are also repeatedly reminded of the significance of the spiritual and the physical, the spiritual and the material, the transcendental and the earthly, all of which recur in many works of art from all periods and all countries.