

From: *Bertrand Lavier*, curated by I. Gianelli e G. Verzotti, exhibition catalog (Rivoli-Torino, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, 17 October 1996 – 12 January 1997), Edizioni Charta, Milano 1996, pp. 11-12.

## ***Movie camera-Sculpture: Bertrand Lavier***

**Ida Gianelli**

Art and cinema, art and photography, art and theatre all look at the staging of a landscape and a situation. All have the capacity to toss places and things into a crucible where the material, having lost its fixity and opacity, reconnects with a profound life, shows itself to be enlivened, not in opposition to the idea or glance, but fertilized by them, traversed by a flow of energy that is perpetual activity.

With his earliest photographic and graphic works in 1974, Bertrand Lavier already declares his affinity for framing and projection, sequence and montage. These pieces function neither in the sense of a fable, a prisoner of illusions and tales, nor in the sense of a stylized abstraction. Rather, they are used as a renewal that "traces" reality and is its double. He doesn't photograph the outer shell of places or people, but cuts out their physical and concrete core: a definition of surface and chromatic weave. More than create or project images, Lavier uses light for a *découpage* (cutting) of the world. He resorts to a movie camera or an ideal still camera in order to reveal the details that he cuts out and places before viewers, to give them the feeling of the event's total presence.

The hypothesis is a real testimony where the movie camera of art is employed for a critical "espionage" that brings out the enigma of things, their coexistence, their logic of relationships, their being.

In a situation pushed to extremes, Lavier uncovers, reveals and removes. He cuts out environments and details with the goal of placing them in the world of the glance like terrible and fascinating, absurd and comical, poetic and dramatic monsters. *Découpage* lies at the base of Lavier's poetics, as does montage, so that his art emerges and develops with his mounting of objects in order to initiate them to a new being, half-conscious half-unconscious.

The predominant element in his film-sculpture is the way of cutting and framing, assembling and giving semantic expansion to reality. Within sculpture Lavier operates in the same way that Dziga Vertov does in cinema, putting into practice an art journal that can fix the fragments, events and historic processes of an object as well as of an environment or a piece of architecture. His is a sort of movie camera-sculpture for recording the pure state that interests him for staging a realism of mystery, an enigmatic and hieratic reality that, under the cutting and isolating glance of sculpture, can revive myths without resorting to trickery or artificiality. In this sense the mixing of figures - painting and object - or the combination of elements - thing upon thing, serve to provoke surprise and therefore, as in cinema, reveal the magical and poetic condition of the world.

At times the apparent incongruity of his assemblages denounces a satirical and scandalous truth, since it reveals the sense of magnetism instituted by art's mechanisms of isolation, such as bases and pedestals, or it reveals the subliminal Disneylike concept of art, from painting to sculpture, with its repertory of formal and visual banalities. Lavier's uniqueness lies precisely in this "espionage" of the betrayal of the avant-garde and the presumed innovations it conveys.

Lavier works to define an everyday sense of the modern, determined by the repetition of norms that

have, at this point, become the patrimony of children. He works with "misunderstandings," exposing the somnambulistic repetitiousness of art that manoeuvres, extrapolates, contaminates and imitates, but forgets the enigmatic condition of banal things, of childlike and simple use. Thus his art tends to move at the threshold of secret and mystery, along the screen-surface of cinema and photography, to transfer there things that are invisible, whether because they are always seen or because they are enigmatic, like one of de Chirico's gloves or biscuits. In fact, Lavier's cinematic "shots," approach an industrial archeology of the present; through excavation and framing they reveal the true and the false, made up of the icons of subculture. Once found, he exhibits them as sculptures or as archeological finds, with their enchantment and their love for excess and strangeness. And yet they remain locks, little bears, bricks, skate-boards, magazine racks, but seen with the "sublime" tension of the archaic. Their contemplative amazement is typical of unstructured filming that focuses on street personalities and actors who then become heroes and heroines. Even if they are phantasms and memories, they grow slowly before our eyes, they turn into actors. Thus it is not difficult to predict that Lavier's art will flank the filming of reality and the filming of unreality, in order to unleash the central role of his simulacra and artificial images, as in the Walt Disney sculptures, so that these spread the glance toward the viewers, laying before them frugal *tableaux vivants*.