

Franco Vaccari

(Modena, Italy, 1936)

Franco Vaccari's *Esposizioni in tempo reale* (*Exhibitions in Real Time*) is the central axis of his research, around which his art has developed—a series of works and exhibitions that take shape in public, with the artist involving people in his creative process and feeding off their reactions much more than his esthetic choices. One of Vaccari's fundamental intuitions in this openness to expressive possibilities is his frequent use of technological languages, such as photography and video, which, until then, he had always found to be mechanisms of power more than of participation.

Photography, which emerged along with the development of colonialism and ethnographic and Lombrosian theories, had focused on the masses only in order to categorize their deviancies from the code of normality. Thus, through the use of expanded political journalism, prescribed social codes were strengthened and photography used to reflect authoritarian views of the people.

After the advent of film, with its Italian history as a tool of the fascist revolution, the impact of television was even more pervasive, due to its widespread dissemination that began to invade the private space of every citizen, with few exceptions. The myth of live broadcasts, that is, transmission in real time, was the celebration of an event that was presented closed off in its glittering, director-driven packaging, similar to what happens in cinema or theater, but even more so due to the distancing between public and performer and among individual members of the public from one another. In terms of technology, Vaccari's videos and video installations bring back to the table the possibility of opening up the transmission of images and communications to the dimension of feedback, offering the possibility of private use of the technological medium and a reversal of the hierarchy of the flow of the signal.

Esposizione in tempo reale n. 6 – Il mendicante elettronico (*Exhibition in Real Time N. 6 – The Electronic Beggar*, 1973) was created in a public square in Graz, next to a tram stop. On the ground, against one of the walls delineating the outdoor space, Vaccari had set up a television, switched on. The fixed-camera monitor framed the image of a hat and two hands and, in double exposure, the phrase "Der Blinde kommt gleich" ("the blind man will be right back"). In this work there are several reversals of common codes of televisual communication. The image does not come from someone who holds power, from state television (which at the time was almost the only offering), but from the humblest of private citizens: the marginalized, the poor who have slid outside the system of production. It is not a transmission that starts out from a studio, to reach the private space of homes, but rather a transmission of something private, placed in a public place, namely the place of human contact among people who are increasingly distanced from the growing number of hours spent in front of the television. Precisely there, where the physicality of the beggar, with his inescapable concrete presence, can still annoy citizens, a

television—that is, an absence, or at least a separation—ends up revolutionizing the power relationship between those who are marginal and those who participate in society. Thus it is always through a reversal mechanism that what was invisible—the physical body of the beggar—by becoming even more invisible and immaterial, conquers the position of authority as well as the attention of the glance. (EV)

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