

The 3 themes

Tema 1

Is modernity our antiquity?

Many of the utopian projects of modernity have survived only as fragments and today appear “unfinished”. Many of the material structures, forms and achievements we associate with concepts of modernity seem to be disappearing amid present-day transformation processes. Yet at the same time, the real and conceptual spaces of modernity - its aesthetic and political structures and ideas - continue to be a major preoccupation of numerous projects taking place in the artistic realm and beyond, and also give rise to conflicting projections. Is modernity our antiquity?

Roger M. Buergel writes in regard to the “leitmotifs” for the exhibition (December 2005): “Is modernity our antiquity? – This is the first question. It is fairly obvious that modernity, or modernity’s fate, exerts a profound influence on contemporary artists. Part of that attraction may stem from the fact that no one really knows if modernity is dead or alive. It seems to be in ruins after the totalitarian catastrophes of the 20th century (the very same catastrophes to which it somehow gave rise). It seems utterly compromised by the brutally partial application of its universal demands (liberté, égalité, fraternité) or by the simple fact that modernity and coloniality went, and probably still go, hand in hand. Still, people’s imaginations are full of modernity’s visions and forms (and I mean not only Bauhaus but also arch-modernist mindsets transformed into contemporary catchwords like ‘identity’ or ‘culture’). In short, it seems that we are both outside and inside modernity, both repelled by its deadly violence and seduced by its most immodest aspiration or potential: that there might, after all, be a common planetary horizon for all the living and the dead.”