

# DYING TO SEE IT! -A SURVEY OF DEATH IN CONTEMPORARY ART NIC COSTA

A while back I was visited by a noted contemporary Cypriot collector who considered himself a connoisseur. He asked me what I had for sale. There was an exhibition on at the time and therefore a variety of work on display. 'Do you have any work by Cypriots?' he asked.

'One or two,' I replied.  
'Are they famous?' he asked.  
'No,' I replied 'but their work is interesting'  
'Are they dead?' he asked.  
'No,' I replied 'they are all still alive'.  
'Oh no!' he exclaimed, walking off without bothering to look at anything. 'I only buy famous dead Cypriot artists.'

In the popular psyche it is well known that you can't be a good artist unless you're dead. It stems from a law of economics concerning supply and demand. Once dead, no more work can be produced, therefore limited supply leads to greater profit.

In London, back in the early 1970's four students were sitting round a table in a pub. They were sipping their beer and wondering what they had to do to get famous. 'Start a religion' said one, 'gurus always have pots of money and beautiful young women falling at their feet'. However, the idea was shot down, none of the group had any religious instincts and what they wanted was instant fame. 'Ok... what if we stage a ritual involving a sacrifice in the name of Art?' 'That's a great idea, we could call the media to let them know what we are going to do and invite them to film it.' 'No, not an invitation but a demand- we should threaten to perform the sacrifice if they do not turn up at the appointed time.' 'But what shall we sacrifice? We really need to kill something in order to get attention.' 'How about a chicken?' 'Come on lads we're in England. We love dogs. Let's sacrifice a dog!' 'Yes why not. A cute innocent lovely puppy!' Suddenly dreams of mass publicity filled their heads- the clamor and uproar it would cause- they would become

Τελευταία με επισκέφθηκε ένας καλά γνωστός σύγχρονος Κύπριος συλλέκτης – που θεωρεί τον εαυτό του ως ειδήμονα – και με ρώτησε αν είχα κάτι για πώληση. Υπήρχε μια έκθεση εκείνες τις μέρες, όπου παρουσιάζονταν διάφορα έργα. 'Έχεις καθόλου έργα Κυπρίων;' με ρώτησε.  
'Έχω ένα ή δύο,' του απάντησα.  
'Είναι φημισμένοι οι δημιουργοί τους;' 'Όχι,' είπα, 'αλλά η δουλειά τους είναι ενδιαφέρουσα.'  
'Έχουν πεθάνει;'  
'Όχι, είναι ζωντανοί,' απάντησα.  
'Ω, όχι,' είπε βγαίνοντας έξω χωρίς να κοιτάξει οτιδήποτε, 'έγω μόνο έργα φημισμένων νεκρών Κυπρίων αγοράζω.'

Αποτελεί κοινή παραδοχή ότι δεν μπορεί κάποιος να θεωρηθεί καλός καλλιτέχνης, αν δεν έχει ήδη πεθάνει. Αυτό έχει τη βάση του στο νόμο της οικονομίας περί προσφοράς και ζήτησης. Όταν πεθάνει κάποιος δεν μπορεί να παράξει άλλο έργο και έτσι η περιορισμένη προσφορά οδηγεί σε μεγαλύτερη αξία.  
Στις αρχές της δεκαετίας του '70, τέσσερις φοιτητές στο Λονδίνο αντάλλαξαν ιδέες γύρω από το τι έπρεπε να κάνουν, για να γίνουν διάσημοι. 'Ας δημιουργήσουμε μια θρησκεία,' είπε ο ένας. 'Οι γκουρού έχουν δοχεία γεμάτα με χρήματα και πλήθος από όμορφες νέες γυναίκες στα πόδια τους!'  
Η ιδέα υποβλήθηκε, απορρίφθηκε όμως, αφού κανένας δεν είχε θρησκευτικές τάσεις και αφού τη φήμη που επιδίωκαν ήθελαν να την αποκτήσουν αμέσως.  
'Εντάξει... γιατί δεν παρουσιάζουμε μια τελετή που να περιλαμβάνει μια θυσία στο όνομα της Τέχνης;' 'Είναι μια πολύ καλή ιδέα και θα μπορούσαμε να προσκαλέσουμε και τα ΜΜΕ να την παρακολουθήσουν και να την κινηματογραφήσουν.'  
'Όχι! Όχι να τα προσκαλέσουμε. Να απαιτήσουμε να έρθουν, απειλώντας ότι, αν δε φθάσουν έγκαιρα στην καθορισμένη ώρα, θα παρουσιάσουμε

Geçenlerde kendisini işinin uzmanı kabul eden Kıbrıslı ünlü bir çağdaş koleksiyoncu ziyaretime geldi. Bana satılık neler olduğunu sordu. O sıralar bir sergi vardı ve dolayısıyla epeyce bir sanat eseri sergileniyordu. 'Kıbrıslılar tarafından yapılmış eserler var mı?' diye sordu. 'Bir iki tane var,' dedim. 'Ünlüler mi?' diye sordu. 'Hayır ama eserleri ilginç' diye cevap verdim. 'Ölüler mi?' diye sordu. 'Hayır', dedim 'hâlâ hayattalar'. 'Off!' diye kendi kendine söylendi, ve bakmaya bile tenezzül etmeden gitmeye koyuldu. 'Ben sadece ünlü ve ölü olan Kıbrıslı sanatçıların eserlerini alırım.'  
Halk arasında yerleşmiş bir anlayış vardır ki, ölü olmadığın sürece iyi bir sanatçı olamazsın. Bu anlayışın temeli iktisat kanunundaki arz – talep ilişkisine kadar dayanır. Öldüğünüz zaman, artık hiçbirşey üretemezsiniz, ve böylece arz sınırlı olduğu için kâr daha yüksek olur.  
1970'lerde Londra'da bir barda, dört öğrenci nasıl ünlü olabileceklerini düşünüyorlardı. İçlerinden biri 'dini bir akım başlatalım', dedi, 'guruların her zaman çok parası olur ve etrafları hep genç ve güzel kadınlarla doludur.'  
Fakat bu fikir tutmadı, gruptan kimsenin dini sezgileri yoktu ve tek istedikleri kısa yoldan şöhret olmaktı.  
'Peki... o zaman bir ayın sahneleyip Sanat adına bir kurban versek?' 'Bu harika bir fikir, izlemeleri ve filme almaları için medyayı da davet ederiz.'  
'Hayır, bu bir davet değil, bir talep olmalı – eğer kararlaştırılan vakitte gelmezlerse kurban etmeye başlayacağımızı söyleyerek tehdit etmeliyiz.'  
'Peki ne kurban edeceğiz? İlgi çekmek için gerçekten birşey öldürmeliyiz.'  
'Bir tavuğa ne dersiniz?' 'Hadi ama arkadaşlar, İngiltere'deyiz. Köpekleri severiz.

famous overnight- all in the cause of Art! After a few moments of reverie the conversation drifted on to other topics and the subject of this thought experiment was quietly dropped. The closest it came to reality was a few weeks later when one of the group accidentally ran over a sheep with his motorbike.

Early in 2008 I received a number of emails asking me to sign a world wide petition against an obscure Costa Rican artist named Guillermo Vargas, who in 2007 decided to use a dog as part of his art. He found a stray, tied it to the wall of a gallery and left it there until it starved to death. Many people visited the gallery but paid absolutely no attention to the dog. Vargas claimed that he was making a point about human nature, that those who saw the suffering of the dog just walked on by just as they do in their daily lives and that if it had been left on the street to die, no-one would have even cared about its existence.

Subsequently the organizers of the Central American Biennial invited him to repeat the artwork at the Biennial of 2008. This led to worldwide protests and it is unlikely the artwork will ever be repeated; however Guillermo Vargas is now a world famous artist!

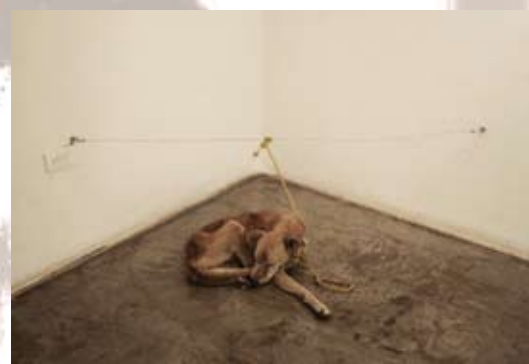
Another exhibition held sometime ago featured tanks of live fish in which visitors were invited to press a button which would immediately electrocute the fish, thereby giving them a god like power. This inevitably caused public outrage.

Art and death have been inextricably linked since time immemorial. Whilst for centuries it has merely been depicted either overtly or covertly as part of imagery- the mid to late 20th century

τη θυσία χωρίς να τα περιμένουμε.' 'Τι, όμως, να θυσιάσουμε; Μήπως ένα κοτόπουλο;'  
'Όχι, στην Αγγλία ζούμε, όπου όλοι αγαπούν τα σκυλιά. Ας θυσιάσουμε ένα σκυλί.'  
'Ναι, γιατί όχι. Ένα έξιπνο, αθώο σκυλάκι!'  
'Ξαφνικά το μυαλό τους γέμισε με όνειρα πως η εναντίον τους κατακραυγή του κόσμου θα τους έδινε ευρεία δημοσιότητα και ότι θα γίνονταν διάσημοι μέσα σε μια μόνο νύχτα. Και όλα αυτά στο όνομα της Τέχνης!'  
'Υστερα από λίγη ώρα ονειροπόλησης, η συνομιλία στράφηκε προς άλλα θέματα και η πιο πάνω ιδέα σιωπηρά απορρίφθηκε. Το μόνο που τελικά συνέβη – λίγες βδομάδες αργότερα – ήταν ένας από την ομάδα να πατήσει σε δυστύχημα ένα πρόβατο με τη μηχανή του.

Νωρίς το 2008 πήρα ένα αριθμό ηλεκτρονικών μηνυμάτων που μου ζητούσαν να υπογράψω μια παγκόσμια έκτασης αναφορά εναντίον του αμφιλεγόμενου Κουσταρικανού καλλιτέχνη Guillermo Vargas, ο οποίος το 2007 αποφάσισε να χρησιμοποιήσει ένα σκυλί σαν μέρος της Τέχνης του. Βρήκε ένα αδύσποτο, το έδεσε στον τοίχο μιας γκαλερί και το άφησε εκεί μέχρι που πέθανε από την πείνα. Πολλοί άνθρωποι επισκέφθηκαν την γκαλερί, αλλά δεν έδωσαν στο σκυλί απολύτως καμιά προσοχή. Αυτό που ήθελε να δείξει, είπε ο Vargas, είναι η ανθρωπινή φύση. Ότι αυτοί που είδαν το ζώο να υποφέρει το προσπέρασαν και συνέχισαν το δρόμο τους σαν να μη συνέβαινε τίποτε και ότι, αν το σκυλί αφηνόταν να πεθάνει στο δρόμο, κανείς περαστικός δεν θα ενδιαφερόταν γι' αυτό.

Bir köpek kurban edelim!' 'Evet neden olmasın. Şirin masum bir köpek yavrusu!' Bir anda kafaları şöhr olma hayalleriyle doldu; şöhrlerinin yaratacağı yankıyla... Bir gecede ünlü olacaklardı – hepsi Sanat uğruna!  
Bir süre hayallere daldıktan sonra sohbet farklı konulara kaydı ve bu fikirden usulca vazgeçildi. Bu hayale en çok yaklaşılardan birkaç hafta sonra grup üyelerinden birinin motosikletiyle kazara bir koyunu ezmesi oldu.  
2008'in başlarında Kosta Rika'lı meçhul sanatçı Guillermo Vargas'a karşı dünya çapında başlatılan bir imza kampanyasına katılmamı isteyen bir e-mail aldım. Vargas 2007 yılında sanatının bir parçası olarak bir köpeği kullanmaya karar vermişti. Bir sokak köpeği buldu, onu bir galerinin duvarına bağladı ve açlıktan ölmesi için orada bıraktı. Galeriye birçok kişi gezdi fakat hiçbiri köpeklerle ilgilenmedi. Vargas amacının insan doğasıyla ilgili birşey kanıtlanmak olduğunu savundu. Can çekişen köpeği görenlerin günlük hayatlarında yaptıkları gibi sadece önünden geçip gittiklerini ve eğer o köpek sokakta ölüme terk edilmiş olsaydı kimsenin varlığını umursamayacağını iddia etti. Akabinde Central American Bienali'nin organizatörleri Vargas'ı sanat çalışmasını tekrar etmesi için 2008'deki sergilerine davet ettiler. Bu olay dünya çapında tepkilere neden oldu; ve bundan sonra bu 'sanat çalışması'nın tekrar edilme olasılığı çok düşük görünüyor; ama Guillermo Vargas artık dünyaca ünlü bir sanatçı!  
Bir süre önce düzenlenen başka bir sergide depolar dolusu canlı balık vardı. Ziyaretçilerin katılımıyla



Guillermo Vargas "Eres Lo Que Lees" ("You Are What You Read") Nicaragua 2007





has seen a rise in the number of artists who try and use it directly. Perhaps one of the earliest was a New York sculptor named Robert Irwin in the 1930's. He was intensely focused on the energy latent in man for creativity through 'visualization'. He decided to channel his sexual energy into his art by means of castration. When a doctor refused, he tried to do it himself and almost ended up bleeding to death. His life culminated in his committing a triple murder. Murder for him helped satisfy an 'overpowering urge' for a tremendous emotional experience which he could then apply to his work.

The 1960's in particular witnessed the birth of a number of movements whose express purpose was supposedly to break new boundaries and challenge perception. Without doubt some of these attracted sadomasochists who used art as a platform for their own perversions. Most notable were the Vienna Actionists. They glorified in amongst other things, urination, coprophilia, bestiality, and animal sacrifice. In 1962 Otto Muehl, the prime mover of the group declared that 'the aesthetics of the dungheap are the moral means against conformism, materialism and stupidity'. In the 1970s his performance based film work included amongst other things, the decapitation of a live goose which was then thrust into a young woman's vagina.

So the perversion of the 1930's became 'art' in the 1960's, and then following Muehl's imprisonment in 1991 for pederasty, it was seen as perversion again.

However, others it seems were listening- death is an easy way to generate publicity and attention- nobody has to think too hard, the shock of it is already deeply ingrained within each of us, we are both fascinated and horrified by it- the artist has to do little

Ακολούθως ο Vargas προσκλήθηκε από τους οργανωτές της Biennial Κεντρικής Αμερικής να επαναλάβει αυτό που έκανε με το σκυλί και στη δική τους έκθεση, το 2008. Το γεγονός αυτό προκάλεσε παγκόσμιας έκτασης διαμαρτυρίες και είναι απίθανο να επαναληφθεί ποτέ η πιο πάνω πράξη. Παρόλα αυτά, όμως, ο Vargas εξακολουθεί σήμερα να θεωρείται σε όλο τον κόσμο ένας μεγάλος καλλιτέχνης! Άλλη μια έκθεση που έγινε πριν αρκετό καιρό παρουσίασε δεξαμενές με ζωντανά ψάρια στην οποία οι επισκέπτες προσκαλούνταν να πατήσουν ένα κουμπι προκαλώντας ηλεκτροπληξία στα ψάρια, δίνοντας τους έτσι μια θεική δύναμη. Αυτό αναπόφευκτα προκάλεσε δημόσια κατακραυγή.

Η τέχνη και ο θάνατος συνδέονται μεταξύ τους από αμνημονεύτων χρόνων. Ενώ ο δεσμός τέχνης και θανάτου απεικονιζόταν για αιώνες, φανερά ή συγκεκριμένα, σαν διακοσμητικό στοιχείο, από τα μέσα και προς το τέλος του εικοστού αιώνα παρουσιάζεται μια αύξηση στον αριθμό των καλλιτεχνών που κάνουν άμεση χρήση του δεσμού αυτού.

Ένας από τους πρώτους, ή ο πρώτος ίσως, που χρησιμοποίησε το δεσμό τέχνης και θανάτου, ήταν ένας γλύπτης από τη Νέα Υόρκη, ο Robert Irwin, τη δεκαετία του '30. Ο Irwin αποφάσισε να διοχετευθεί στην τέχνη του τη σεξουαλική του ενέργεια μέσω του ευνουχισμού. Όταν ο γιατρός αρνήθηκε να τον ευνουχίσει, ο Irwin αποφάσισε να ευνουχιστεί από μόνος του και παραλίγο να πεθάνει από αιμορραγία. Τελικά διέπραξε ένα τριπλό φόνο, αφού θεώρησε ότι η δολοφονία θα τον βοηθήσει να ικανοποιήσει την "ακαταμάχητη παρακίνηση" για μια τρομερή συναισθηματική εμπειρία, την οποία θα εφάρμοζε στα έργα του.

Κατά τη δεκαετία του '60 εμφανίστηκε η δημιουργία αριθμού κινήμάτων

gerçekleşen gösteride, insanlardan bir düğmeye basarak balığa elektrik verip onu anında öldürmeleri istendi; bu şekilde insanlar kendilerine tanrısal bir güç verildiğini hissediyorlardı. Bu olay doğal olarak halkın tepkisine neden oldu. Sanat ve ölüm arasında ezelden beri akıl almaz bir bağ olmuştur. Ölüm, yüzyıllar boyunca bazen açık bir biçimde bazen ise gizlice görüntünün bir parçası olarak resmedilmişti- 20. yüzyılın ortalarından sonlarına kadar ise ölümü tema olarak açıkça kullanan sanatçıların sayısında bir artış görüldü. Bunun ilk örneklerinden biri 1930'larda New York'lu heykeltıraş Robert Irwin'dir. Irwin, 'görselleştirme' aracılığıyla insanın içindeki gizli yaratıcılık enerjisine yoğunlaştı. Kısırlaştırma yoluyla cinsel enerjisini sanatına yöneltmeye karar verdi. Bir doktor tarafından geri çevrilince, kendisi yapmayı denedi ve kan kaybı yüzünden ölümün eşliğinden döndü. Irwin'in yaşamı, üçlü cinayet işlemesiyle son noktaya ulaştı. Onun gözünde cinayet, sonrasında sanatına yararlı olacak muazzam bir duygusal deneyime karşı duyduğu 'karşıkönüllük' arzuyu dindirdi. Özellikle 1960'larda ilk hedefi kasıtlı bir şekilde sınırları yıkmak ve algıya meydan okumak olan birtakım akımlar ortaya çıktı. Elbette bu akımların bazıları sanatı kendi sapıklıklarını uygulamak için bir saha olarak kullanan sadomazoşistlerin ilgi odağı oldu. Bunların arasında en çok dikkat çeken Viyanalı Aksiyonistler grubuydu. İşeme, koprofil, hayvanlarla cinsel ilişki, ve hayvan kurban etme gibi bir sürü şeyle ünlü oldular. 1962'de grubun öncüsü olan Otto Muehl 'pislikteki estetik gelenekçiliğe, materyalizme ve aptallığa karşı çıkan ahlaki

more than to show it. Just as Muehl was being imprisoned in Austria, in England Charles Saatchi was looking to make a name for himself as a shrewd dealer. He trawled the art schools and plucked some of a very lucky generation out of total obscurity and with his astute business acumen made them centre stage. In 1992 the first Young British Artists exhibition was staged in London. Amongst the exhibitors was a young Damien Hurst who through Saatchi's financial assistance displayed a work entitled the Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living, which was none other than a dead shark preserved in formaldehyde.

Here, we may question just how original Hirst's thinking was, for in his first year as a student at Goldsmith's in 1986 there had been a huge public furor about another shark made of fiberglass by a sculptor named John Buckley, which he embedded head first in the roof of his house to commemorate the anniversary of the dropping of the atom bomb. According to others Hirst simply pinched the idea from a shop display in Shoreditch that had used a dead shark for decoration.

However, realizing from the public furor, and with sound financial backing, that he was on to a good thing Hirst presented a new work at the Venice Biennale of 1993, Mother and Child Divided, which was in reality a cow and a calf cut into sections and exhibited in a series of separate glass cases. A subsequent work in 1995 entitled Two Fucking and Two Watching was banned in New York by public health officials; it featured the rotting corpses of a cow and a bull, because of fears of 'vomiting amongst visitors'. I will reserve judgment on Hirst's innovative and artistic abilities, but he has subsequently proved himself to be the arch showman and self publicist and instinctively recognized that in this

των οποίων διακηρυγμένος στόχος ήταν, υποτίθεται, να σπάσουν τα περιοριστικά πλαίσια και να αμφισβητήσουν τη νόηση και την αντίληψη. Χωρίς αμφιβολία, μερικά από αυτά τα κινήματα προσέλκυσαν σαδομαζοχιστές, οι οποίοι χρησιμοποιούσαν την τέχνη σαν μια πλατφόρμα έκφρασης των δικών τους διαστρεφών. Από αυτούς πιο αξιοπρόσεκτοι ήταν οι Ακτιβιστές της Βιέννης (Vienna Actionists), οι οποίοι εξύμνησαν, μεταξύ άλλων, την ούρηση, την κοπροφιλία, την κτηνωδία και τη ζωοθυσία. Το 1962 ο Otto Muehl, ο ηγέτης του κινήματος, δήλωσε πως "η αισθητική των κοπράνων αποτελεί το ηθικό μέσο εναντίον του κομφορμισμού, του υλισμού και της ηλιθιότητας". Στη δεκαετία του '70, η κινηματογραφική του δουλειά περιλάμβανε – μεταξύ άλλων – τον αποκεφαλισμό μιας ζωντανής χήνας και το σπρώξιμο της στον κόλπο μιας νεαρής γυναίκας.

Έτσι, οι διαστρεφές στη δεκαετία του '30 έγιναν 'τέχνη' στη δεκαετία του '60 και, μετά τη φυλάκιση του Muehl για παιδεραστία το 1991, θεωρήθηκαν ως διαστρεφές και πάλι.

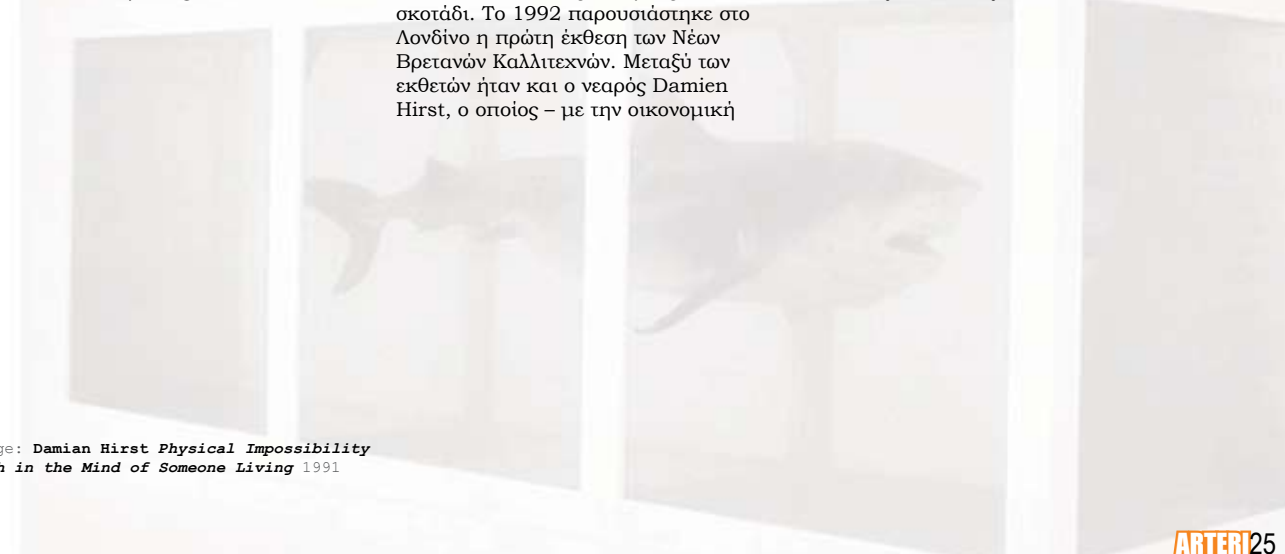
Όμως, κάποιοι άλλοι φαίνεται να άκουγαν – ο θάνατος είναι ένας εύκολος τρόπος για να γενικευτεί δημοσιότητα και προσοχή, κανείς δε χρειάζεται να σκερτεί πολύ, το σοκ του είναι ήδη βαθιά ριζωμένο μέσα μας, είμαστε τόσο νοσητευμένοι όσο και τρομαγμένοι από αυτόν – ο καλλιτέχνης δε χρειάζεται να κάνει τίποτα παραπάνω από το να μας τον δείξει.

Ενώ ο Muehl φυλακίζόταν στην Αυστρία, στην Αγγλία ο Charles Saatchi προσπαθούσε να κάνει γνωστό το όνομα του σαν ένας εξυπνος έμπορος. Βοήθησε τις σχολές τεχνών και με την επιχειρηματική ευφυΐα του απάλλαξε πολλούς τυχερούς από το σκοτάδι. Το 1992 παρουσιάστηκε στο Λονδίνο η πρώτη έκθεση των Νέων Βρετανών Καλλιτεχνών. Μεταξύ των εκθετών ήταν και ο νεαρός Damien Hirst, ο οποίος – με την οικονομική

bir anlayıştır' diye savundu. 1970'lerde yaptığı performans dayalı bir film çalışmasında, canlı bir kazın başının kesilmesi ve daha sonra bir kadının vajinasına sokulması gibi daha birsürü şey yer aldı. Böylece 1930'ların sapıklığı 1960'larda 'sanat' olarak kabul edildi, ve daha sonra Muehl'in 1991'de sübyancılıktan hapse atılmasının ardından tekrar sapıklık olarak adlandırıldı. Fakat diğerleri usulca denmiyorlardı – ölüm şöret elde etmenin ve dikkat çekmenin kolay bir yolu – kimsenin fazla düşünmesine gerek kalmıyor, ölümün şoku zaten hepimizin içine işlemiş – bizi hem büyülüyor hem de dehşete düşürüyor – sanatçının onu göstermekten başka pek birşey yapmasına gerek kalmıyor.

Nitekim Muehl Avusturya'da hapse atıldığı sırada, Charles Saatchi İngiltere'de sıkı bir satıcı olarak isim yapmaya çalışıyordu. Sanat okullarını tarayıp şanslı nesillerden birkaçını içinde buldukları bilinmezlikten çekip çıkararak kurnaz iş zekâsıyla onları sahnenin yıldızı yapıyordu. 1992'de ilk Young British Artists sergisi Londra'da sahnelendi. Eserlerini sergileyenler arasında Damien Hurst adında genç bir adam vardı ve Saatchi'nin finansal desteğiyle sergilediği Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living (Yaşayan Birisinin Zihninde Ölümün Fiziksel İmkansızlığı) başlıklı eseri, formaldehit kullanılarak saklanmış ölü bir köpek balığından başka birşey değildi. Bu noktada, Hirst'in fikrinin orijinalliğini sorgulayabiliriz, ne de olsa 1986 yılında Goldsmiths'te öğrenci olduğu sırada John Buckley adında bir heykeltıraşın, camelyaftan yaptığı ve ilk atom bombasının atılışının yıldönümünün anmak için evinin çatısına

b/g image: Damian Hirst *Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* 1991







current age the actual art counts for little but that the showmanship and hype surrounding it are what really matters. George Wombwell and P T Barnum built up their successful circus, menagerie and freak show careers in the latter half of the nineteenth century on the same principle.

Whilst Muehl was little more than a pervert, Hirst is a calculating showman. Others of his peers use Sex, he uses Death, both of which are so instinctive in us that the artists need do little more than show it to engender arousal or disgust, and then come along and claim the credit.

Enter Gunther von Hagens the German anatomist, inventor of plastination, whereby biological tissue is preserved using polymers. In 1995 the first 'Body Worlds' exhibition opened in Tokyo featuring plasticized corpses. It was a great success- over 3 million came, and it has subsequently toured the world with an audience so far of some 25 million! Hagens has now moved on to selling plasticized body parts- the ultimate in home décor!

As ever there is always a silent precursor. In the late sixties, in London, some German friends came to visit. I decided to show them Highgate Cemetery. It's a wonderful place, looking like the classic set for a vampire film. At that time it was abandoned and overgrown, and to get in you had to climb over a wall, but it was an exciting thing to do. The day was bright, birds were singing, and there were many flowers growing wild amidst the tombs. After turning a corner we noticed a trail of bandages. With heads bowed we followed them. "Oh My God look at that!" We looked up, and there in front of us was a body that someone had dragged

στήριξη του Saatchi – παρουσίασε ένα έργο με τίτλο 'The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living', που δεν ήταν τίποτε άλλο παρά ένας νεκρός καρχαρίας διατηρημένος σε φορμόλη. Η πιο πάνω ιδέα του Hirst δεν ξέρουμε πόσο πρωτότυπη είναι, δεδομένου ότι, κατά το πρώτο έτος των σπουδών του στο Goldsmith το 1986, εκδηλώθηκε ένας τεράστιος δημόσιος ενθουσιασμός για ένα άλλο καρχαρία από υαλοβάμβακα, φτιαγμένο από ένα γλύπτη με το όνομα John Buckley. Το κεφάλι του καρχαρία αυτού ο Buckley το σφίγησε στην οροφή του σπιτιού του σε ανάμνηση της επετείου της πτώσης της πρώτης ατομικής βόμβας. Σύμφωνα με άλλους, ο Hirst πήρε την ιδέα από ένα κατάστημα που χρησιμοποίησε ένα νεκρό καρχαρία για διακόσμηση.

Εν πάση περιπτώσει, αντιλαμβανόμενος ο Hirst, από τον ενθουσιασμό του κόσμου και από τη σημαντική οικονομική στήριξη που είχε, ότι βρισκόταν σε καλό δρόμο, παρουσίασε στην Μπιενάλε της Βενετίας το 1993 μια καινούργια δουλειά με τίτλο 'Mother and Child Divided'. Το έργο αυτό παρουσίαζε μια αγελάδα και ένα μοσχάρι να εκτίθενται σε κομμάτια σε μια σειρά από ξεχωριστά γυάλινα κουτιά. Μια επόμενη δουλειά του, το 1995, με τίτλο 'Two Fucking and Two Watching' και που παρουσίαζε τα σάπια πτώματα ενός ταύρου και μιας αγελάδας, απαγορεύτηκε στη Νέα Υόρκη από υγειονομικούς λειτουργούς, από φόβο μήπως προκληθεί εμετός στους επισκέπτες.

Δεν πρόκειται να προχωρήσω σε εκτίμηση των νεωτεριστικών και καλλιτεχνικών ικανοτήτων του Hirst, έχει αποδείξει, όμως, πως είναι ένας εξέχων άνθρωπος του θεάματος και της δημοσιότητας, ο οποίος ενστικτωδώς αντιλήφθηκε πως, στην εποχή του, η πραγματική τέχνη λίγο είναι που μετρά και πως εκείνο που πραγματικά μετρά είναι η επίδειξη και οτιδήποτε την περιβάλλει. Βασίζόμενοι πάνω σε αυτή την αρχή έκτισαν την επιτυχημένη καριέρα τους, στο δεύτερο ήμισυ του 19ου αιώνα, ο George Wombwell και ο P T Barnum

tepeleme sapladiğı köpek balığı halk arasında büyük sansasyon yaratmıştı. Başkalarının deyişine göre ise, Hirst bu fikri vitrininde ölü bir köpek balığını dekorasyon olarak kullanan bir dükkandan çalmıştı. Buna rağmen Hirst, halkın tepkisinin bilinciyle ve aldığı finansal desteğin de yardımıyla, iyi bir iş çıkarmak üzere olduğunu farkettiler ve 1993 Venedik Bienali'nde, Mother and Child Divided isimli yeni bir eserini sundu. Eser, bir inek ve yavrusunun parçalar halinde kesilmiş ayrı ayrı cam kutularda sergilenmesinden ibaretti. Ardından 1995'te Two Fucking and Two Watching başlıklı eseri New York'ta kamu sağlık görevlileri tarafından yasaklandı; bir inek ve bir boğanın çürüyen cesetlerinin 'ziyaretçileri kusturacağı' endişesiyle yasaklandığı belirtildi. Hirst'in yenilikçiliği ve artistik yeteneğiyle ilgili peşin hükümlü olmak istemiyorum, ama sonradan bir şovmene dönüşüp kendi reklamını yapmaya başladı ve içten içe farkettiler ki bu çağda gerçek sanatın pek fazla değeri yok; esas önemli olan şovmenlik ve onu çevreleyen aldatmaca. George Wombwell ve P T Barnum da, 19. yüzyılın ikinci yarısında sirkler, hayvanat bahçeleri ve 'freak show'lar ile elde ettikleri başarılı kariyerlerini aynı prensip üzerine kurdular.

Muehl bir sapıktan başka birşey değildi, fakat Hirst çıkarıcı bir şovmen. Akranları Seks'i kullanırken, o Ölüm'ü kullanıyor, ikisi de o kadar içgüdüsel ki insanları tahrik etmek ya da tiksindirmek için tek yapmaları gereken onları sergilemek, ve sonra da bundan kâr etmek.

from its grave and crucified. The thing just grinned at us, rotting bandages dangling from it. Suddenly the place seemed threatening; every bush seemed to have a pair of maniacal staring eyes behind it. Because we were a group we kept our nerve- even taking some photographs. On leaving we encountered a policeman and told him about our adventure. He looked grim, shook his head, and then with a sigh he exclaimed: "Oh no not again!"

Now that the years have past, I often wonder what it was I saw that day... was it Art?



Highgate Cemetery

Ενώ ο Muehl ήταν κάτι περισσότερο από διεστραμμένος, ο Hirst ήταν ένας πανούργος σόουμαν. Άλλοι καλλιτέχνες χρησιμοποιούν το σεξ, αυτός χρησιμοποιεί το θάνατο. Το σεξ και ο θάνατος είναι τόσο δυνατά ένστικτα του ανθρώπου, ώστε το μόνο που έχει να κάνει ο καλλιτέχνης, για να προκαλέσει είτε διέγερση είτε αηδία, είναι να τα φανερώσει, ερχόμενος μετά να πάρει τον έπαινο.

Ο Gunther von Hagens, Γερμανός ανατόμος, ανακάλυψε τον τρόπο διατήρησης βιολογικών ιστών με τη χρήση του πολυμερισμού. Το 1995 άνοιξε την πρώτη έκθεση με τίτλο 'Body Worlds' στο Τόκιο, παρουσιάζοντας ελαστικά πτώματα και η οποία σημείωσε πολύ μεγάλη επιτυχία, αφού την παρακολούθησαν πάνω από 3 εκατομμύρια επισκέπτες. Ακολούθως, περιοδεύοντας ανά τον κόσμο, την παρακολούθησαν 25 περίπου εκατομμύρια. Σήμερα ο von Hagens ασχολείται με την πώληση πλαστικών ανθρώπινων μελών – η απόλυτη οικιακή διακόσμηση!

Όπως πάντοτε συμβαίνει, υπάρχει ένας σιωπηρός προάγγελος των γεγονότων. Στα τέλη της δεκαετίας του '60 ήρθαν να με επισκεφθούν στο Λονδίνο μερικοί φίλοι από τη Γερμανία και αποφάσισα να τους δείξω το κοιμητήριο του Highgate. Είναι ένα θαυμάσιο μέρος, κλασικό τοπίο για ταινία με βρικολάκες. Ήταν εγκαταλειμμένο και γεμάτο με αγριόχορτα και για να μπει μέσα κάποιος έπρεπε να σκαρφαλώσει στον τοίχο, κάτι πολύ συναρπαστικό. Στριβοντας μια γωνιά παρατηρήσαμε μια σειρά από επιδέσμους, την οποία ακολουθήσαμε με σκυφτά τα κεφάλια. "Ω, Θεέ μου, κοιτάξτε!" Κοιτάξαμε και είδαμε μπροστά μας ένα πτώμα, το οποίο τράβηξε κάποιος από τον τάφο και το σταύρωσε. Μας χαμογέλασε, ενώ κρέμονταν από πάνω του οι σάπιοι επίδεσμοι. Ξαφνικά το μέρος μάς φάνηκε πολύ απειλητικό. Φαινόταν πως πίσω από κάθε θάμνο υπήρχαν μανιακά μάτια να μας κοιτάζουν. Το γεγονός ότι ήμασταν ομάδα μάς έκανε να διατηρήσουμε τη ψυχραιμία μας, ενώ πήραμε και μερικές φωτογραφίες. Φεύγοντας συναντήσαμε ένα αστυνομικό και του περιγράψαμε την περιπέτεια μας. Μας κοίταξε βλοσυρά, κούνησε το κεφάλι και φώναξε με αναστεναγμό: "Ω, όχι, όχι πάλι!"

Τώρα που πέρασαν τα χρόνια, συχνά διερωτώμαι τι ήταν αυτό που είδα εκείνη την ημέρα... ήταν Τέχνη;

Ardından Alman anatomist Gunther von Hagens karşımıza çıkıyor, plastinasyon tekniğini icat eden kişi – biyolojik dokularını polimer kullanılarak korunması. Plastine edilen cesetlerin sergilendiği ilk Body World's sergisi 1995'te Tokyo'da açıldı. Sergi büyük başarı elde etti – 3 milyondan fazla insan katıldı, ve ardından dünya turuna çıkarak 25 milyon insana ulaştı! Hagens şu sıralar plastine edilmiş vücut parçalarını satma işine girişti – ev dekorunda son nokta!

Her zaman için içinde ismi duyulmamış bir öncüdür. 60'lı yılların sonlarında Londra'dayken, birkaç Alman arkadaşım ziyaretime geldiler, ben de onlara Highgate Mezarlığına göstermeye karar verdim. Harika bir yerdir, bir vampir filmi için biçilmiş kaftan. O zamanlar çok bakımsızdı ve her tarafını otlar kaplamıştı. İçeri girmek için bir duvardan atlamanız gerekiyordu, ama heyecanlı olacağınızı düşünürdük. Güneş parlıyordu, kuşlar ötüyordu, ve mezarların aralarını vahşi çiçekler kaplamıştı. Köşeyi döndükten sonra yerdeki bandajları farkettiler. Başlarımız öne eğik takip etmeye başladık. "Aman tanrım şuraya bakın!" Kafamızı kaldırdık, ve orada tam karşımızda birisinin mezarından çıkarıp çarşıya gerdiği bir ceset duruyordu. Bize bakarak sırtıyordu sanki, çürümüş bandajlar üzerinden sarkıyordu. Birdenbire mezarlık gözümüze korkunç görünmeye başladı; sanki her dalın arkasından bir çift göz manyakça bizi dikizliyordu. Birkaç kişi olduğumuz için sinirlerimize hakim olabildik – hatta birkaç fotoğraf bile çektiler. Geri dönerken yolda bir polise rastladık ve ona maceramızdan bahsettik. Pek etkilenmiş görünmedi, kafasını salladı, ve iç çekerek: "Yine mi!" dedi.

Üzerinden bu kadar yıl geçtikten sonra bile, o gün gördüğüm şeyin ne olduğunu merak ediyorum... Sanat mıydı yoksa?