

CUORE DI PIETRA (Heart of Stone) Curated by Mili Romano

This public art project proposes to accompany the urban renewal of the center of Pianoro Nuovo. The initial idea was born while attending the demolition in February 2004 of one of the IACP buildings on via Matteotti that, after World War II and along with the church and elementary school, were among the first buildings in the town. This demolition was the beginning of the PRU (Piano di Riqualificazione Urbana, or Plan of Urban Renewal) intended to radically change the town center.

The need, then, to document the changes and that which is erased and progressively disappears in the urban structure and habits of everyday life has brought me to my first contacts with the inhabitants, mostly elderly, of those houses, who watched with anguish the flooding-in of that traumatic change in their existence. This documentary need also brought me to the ironic-poetical elaboration in photographic form of a sort of “resistance” of the heart of stone of the buildings, made by the progression of generations and the many stories of human life transmitted to us by the walls of the houses.

But, changing the “nostalgic” memory of the place that every demolition inevitably brings with it, I have thought to make it so that this image circulates among the people of the town, seeking to transform it into a sort of catalyst of stories that join the present from the past, in an “energetic memory” projected towards the future, a memory capable of conferring identity. In the reconstructed urban area one would wish that, through artistic and architectural projects, the symbols and voices of that which went before could remain.

Far from wishing to be only a decorative instrument, one of “embellishment” that is often “invisible” as so many “monuments” become when one walks through the city, the artistic work here insinuates itself among the people as a ludic-critical practice: surprising, suggestive, open,

and, in the time and practice of daily relationships, it also proposes to be a dynamic investigatory socio-anthropological instrument for a more profound knowledge of the area and its problems as well as a shared practice, a further stimulant of a reinforcement of the identity of the place and a sense of “mobile belonging” through “recognized” artistic projects and, when possible, the fruit of collective participation.

“Cuore di pietra” began in March 2005 with the affixing of 50 “Cuore di Pietra” posters in the usual designated spaces for public advertising in Pianoro Nuovo, Pianoro Vecchio, Pian di Macina, and Rastignano. I left other posters for a few days on the doorsteps of the apartments of the surrounding houses, also destined for demolition, with a written message that explained the purposes of the project (creation through art of a history and a collective project that aims to come into being over time, from the destruction of the houses to the construction of the new town center) and invited the inhabitants, if they wished to participate, to display the posters outside of their windows on the following day, April 25th, along with, as is still done, the paper banner upon which is written “W la Resistenza.”

Thus simply began “Cuore di Pietra,” which since the fall of 2005 has begun to collaborate with elementary and middle schools and has continued to forge relationships with the inhabitants of the town. It has thus become a work in progress that presumably through 2011, when the reconstruction should be completed, foresees “strategies” of various artistic interventions (both temporary and permanent), according to the involved artists and curators as well as members of the community.

REALIZED WORKS

April 2006. On the palisade of the framework in via Matteotti a sort of mobile “Diary of Cuore di Pietra” has been created, a mural newspaper /

free space of communication between the children and the town composed of drawings, diary pages, projects, and transcripts of the interviews by the children with the inhabitants of the houses in the course of the meetings and visits to those houses. The actions began on Tuesday, April 4 with Cuoghi Corsello's project, made up of writing on a part of the palisade.

In Pianoro's market square we will execute two "throw ups" and a puppet. Text message: "dear teacher, what does "throw up" literally mean? Your little Suf." Text message: "it literally means to throw in an upwards direction... then, in the writing on the palisade, it is like a bubble, something thrown quickly onto a wall or a train. Ciao, Rusty."

With these drawings we wish to give importance to a discipline that is often misinterpreted by society, one that began in New York in the 70s, when the apparently simple gesture of writing one's own name on a wall became recognized.

From this awakening of consciousness all the passages and styles of the study of one's own name and the letters that comprise it have been derived, thus giving life to the hip hop discipline of writers from all over the world.

Even if many exhibitions have been created about the artists that work on the streets, I believe that one has never been organized that was specifically focused on the study of letters, seriously illustrating the evolutionary phenomenon from a historical and stylistic point of view.

Despite the misinformation and the repression (which was quite violent in a few cities), this research has gone forward in the past almost 40 years, fervidly felt as a kind of genetic fever by thousands of children all over the world, including some African countries, seemingly culturally isolated from the others.

This vital fever of writing one's own name on walls, and of understanding one's own stylistic evolution as well as that of others, along with off-hand attempts is, in my opinion, one of the most important art forms in this society.

Few people last long in this discipline because it is very difficult technically as well as conceptually (even if, when a culture confronts it together with many others, the intellectual capacity of all involved begins to grow) and because it is dangerous inasmuch as it is illegal. Thus, after a few initial attempts, many stop, draw something else besides letters, or use stencils because it is easier... whoever remains and moves ahead is a hero.

Thus, when you see all those scribbles on the city walls, before judging negatively remember that they are a force for recognizing and changing calligraphy, the style of one's own 'tag' (signature) can thus evolve through the tags themselves and also society.

Claudio will also construct a 'puppet:' a figurative personage that accompanies his piece (in his case, his throw up)" (from Cuoghi Corsello's project)

June 2006 15 "Cuore di Pietra" postcards were created and put up for sale in the drugstores of Pianoro. These postcards restore to us not only the original images of the project, but also the glances of others, bizarre and surprising, by the artists Alessandra Andrini, Paola Binante, Annalisa Cattani, Cuoghi Corsello, Sandrine Nicoletta, and Michela Ravaglia, that change and mix into the works of the children of some elementary school classes from the "D. Sabbi" school. Over the course of the school year, these children – with the teachers and artists – have begun to reflect upon the changing form of the town, on identity, memory, and new integrations, investigating and following traces and ways of living, giving life to a continuous synergy between inside and outside.

May 2006 – present: realization of a series of ceramic “Cuore di Pietra” tiles with children’s drawings inspired by the themes of living, urban transformations, and fantastic designs that signal an external path in the area that leads from the school to the center of the town, the park, the library.

I told the children who asked “How did this story begin?” about a grandfather who was a dreamer, who went about whistling arias from operas. He said that cities and landscapes come to be known by using one’s legs, with one’s nose in the air, eyes and ears wide open, and a persistence in believing in the ability to change little pieces of the world with one’s own personal vision. I also told them about the distressing story of a house that was the protagonist of a book by Sebastiano Vassalli, and about a short story by Gianni Rodari which tells the story of the soul of Mario, a bricklayer from Valtellina who died while working in a foreign land, who, “stuck in the wall, in the heart of the wall,” continues to experience children’s games, adults’ and adolescents’ arguments, the joys and sorrows of all the village’s inhabitants. (Mili Romano)

November 2006 – Febbraio 2007. “Digital animation” courses held by LOOP srl at the V. Neri Middle School in Pianoro Nuovo with the participation of a group of children from the youth center, with the goal of creating “animated designs” for “Cuore di Pietra.”

Novembre 2006 – Febbraio 2007. Metropolitan cartoon workshop conducted by the artist Maria Piu Cinque (MP5) with several classes from elementary and middle schools, with the goal of creating an installation in the palisades on via Pierino Bolognesi. The workshop was of a month’s

duration; through the study of several techniques of the cartoon with the purpose of creating interventions in the city, it brought a story of objects and inhabitations to fruition that, enlarged, covered an entire area of the palisades on via Pierino Bolognesi.

Maggio 2007. Publication of the “Notebook of Cuore di Pietra,” the first of three books that will, over the course of the next few years, follow and bear witness to the urban change of the town, the work accomplished by the community, and the works realized in collaboration with other artists and critics active in the field of national and international contemporary art (here works by Pippo Ciora, Bartolomeo Pietromarchi, and an interview with Antonio Presti).

The Notebook was able to be published thanks to the contributions (through honorable patronage) of the Province of Bologna (Assessorato alla cultura) and of the Municipality of Pianoro (Assessorato alla cultura), the private sponsorship of the Sayerlack company, the work (almost free in this first phase) of the artists and graphic artists, and the kindness of the publishing house.

October 2007. STRADE BLUARTE, a project of the Province of Bologna and curated by Chiara Pilati, makes a stop at Pianoro Nuovo and “has a conversation” with “Cuore di pietra:” a permanent work by **Sandrine Nicoletta** in the garden in via Gramsci.

November 2007 – febbraio 2008. A symphony of sounds for “Cuore di pietra:” metropolitan music workshop held by **Anna Troisi** with several classes from elementary and middle schools.

December 2007. Work by Zimmerfrei in the portico of the Municipality of

Pianoro, that of the Carisbo and that of Via Matteotti.

January – May 2008. The meetings and interviews with the inhabitants continue.

February – March 2008. “Digital animation” courses held by LOOP srl with several classes from the “D. Sabbi” elementary school.