In 1835 in the eleventh arrondissement of Paris, a few hundred meters from the Boulevard Périférique, in a square meters. The foundry fell in financial crisis after the First World War and was liquidated in 1935 (fig. 1). Now that building has become one of the most famous and popular places in Paris. After the steel it is the moment for art, movement, emotions, in a nutshell an ‘immersive exhibition’ between art and music. In particular, the AMIEX® project (Art and Music Immersive Experience) managed by the Culturespace company founded and chaired by Bruno Monnier. The latest creation of Culturespace was the acquisition of the Plichon foundry and its transformation into a place to make the spectators discover a new category of art shows. A multimedia exhibition that exploits digital technologies in an area of 3,300 square meters. The Atelier des Lumières, Digital Art Center of Paris, was born.

In an interview Monnier made it clear that he realized that “visitors mostly want to live an experience. With the Atelier’s shows consisting in digitized images of masterpieces that are animated with music on immense surfaces, the public can discover a cultural project through a total sensorial experience. It is not a traditional exhibition, visitors do not feel like observers who are in front of the work of art but are instead immersed in the work of art. The immersive experience of a pictorial bath is strengthened by music”. 140 video projectors and a spatial effect sound system create this total immersion. This type of show, recalls Monnier, also solves the problem of transporting the original works, an expensive and delicate problem. Yes, because the immersive experience is all but works in their originality of dimensions, techniques, and history. What is the purpose sought? Monnier adds: “We realized that museums do not interest everyone! With this new technique we can attract anyone, young and old, to bring them closer to art. Or to hodge them to be interested in visiting the traditional exhibitions”.

A nulle immersion: Klimt a Parigi

A nulle immersion: Klimt a Parigi

In 1940 Luciano Emmer (che è nato 100 anni fa, nel 1918) iniziava la sua carriera di autore cinematografico realizzando una serie di documentari d’arte sull’arte. In particolare uno dei documentari che originarono molte obiezioni e discussioni fu Racconto di un affresco sul ciclo di affreschi di Giotto nella cappella degli Scrovegni a Padova. La prima versione fu realizzata nel 1938, una seconda nel 1946. Emmer si era permesso di “far muovere” gli angeli attorno alla croce di Cristo utilizzando le stesse immagini di Giotto e usando la tecnica dell’animazione a passo uno. Aveva inserito il movimento, il passaggio del tempo in modo esplicito in un’opera d’arte intoccabile. Ripete poi la stessa operazione con alcuni disegni di Leonardo da Vinci e con il documentario visse il Leone d’Oro al Festival del Cinema di Venezia nel 1954. Since then many years have passed and documentaries on artists and their works have become very popular. The works are analysed in detail, the camera enters inside the artwork, the picture and the painting becomes three-dimensional, and the actions that take place become animated. Even art shows are changing, the audience should be amused, must be able to play in a kind of perennial videogame with the works of artists. It was natural enough that this would lead to a new kind of exhibition that probably will not be called exhibition anymore but ‘experience’, whatever the meaning of this word.

Keywords: art, cinema Luciano Emmer.

In 1940 Luciano Emmer (who was born 100 years ago, in 1918) began his career as a filmmaker by making a series of art documentaries on art. In particular, one of the documentaries which gave rise to many objections and discussions was Racconto di un affresco (Tale of a fresco) on Giotto’s fresco cycle in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua. The first version was made in 1938, a second one in 1946. Emmer took the liberty of ‘moving’ the angels around the cross of Christ using the same images of Giotto through the technique of one-step animation. He inserted movement, the explicit passage of time in an untouchable work of art. He then repeated the same operation with some of the drawings by Leonardo da Vinci and with this documentary he won the Leone d’Oro at the Festival del Cinema di Venezia (Venice Film Festival) in 1954. Since then many years have passed and documentaries on artists and their works have become very popular. The works are analysed in detail, the camera enters inside the artwork, the picture and the painting becomes three-dimensional, and the actions that take place become animated. Even art shows are changing, the audience should be amused, must be able to play in a kind of perennial videogame with the works of artists. It was natural enough that this would lead to a new kind of exhibition that probably will not be called exhibition anymore but ‘experience’, whatever the meaning of this word.

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Figure 1 Edouard Plichon in the foundry during a break. © Famille Plichon.

A nulle immersion: Klimt in Paris

Michele Emmer

Figure 1 Edouard Plichon nella fonderia durante una pausa. © Famille Plichon.

Nel 1938 nell’undicesimo arrondissement di Parigi, a qualche centinaio di metri dal Boulevard Périférique, quindi in una zona abbastanza lontana dal centro, è nata la fonderia che si chiama del Chemin Vert, una fonderia per il ferro e l’acciaio, fornitrice della marina e delle ferrovie francesi. Sono Jacques François Alexandre e Hilaire Pierre Plichon i fondatori in un edificio di 3.000 metri quadrati. La fonderia entrerà in crisi dopo la prima guerra mondiale fino alla liquidazione nel 1935 (fig. 1). Ora quell’edificio è diventato uno dei luoghi più noti e frequentati di Parigi. Si parla dopo l’acciaio di arte, movimento, emozioni, in poche parole di una ‘immersive exhibition’ tra arte e musica. In particolare il progetto AMIEX® (Art and Music Immersive Experience), gestito dalla società Culturespace, è stato l’acquisizione della fonderia Plichon e la sua trasformazione in un luogo per far provare emozioni agli spettatori di una nuova categoria di mostre d’arte. Una esposizione multimedialmente sfrutta le tecnologie digitali su una superficie di 3.300 metri quadrati. È nato l’Atelier des Lumières, Digital Art Center di Parigi. In una intervista Monnier ha chiarito che si era reso conto che «i visitatori desiderano soprattutto vivere una esperienza. Con le
Michele Emmer – A nulle immersione: Klimt a Parigi

The first sensory experience in Paris, after some years in French smaller cities, is dedicated to Gustav Klimt with a kind of curious appendix that involves Schiele and Friedensreich Hundertwasser. If Klimt and Schiele are contemporaries – Schiele considered himself a pupil of Klimt – and died the same year (1918), Hundertwasser was born and died ten years later (1928 and 2000). Details that are not explained to spectators or they would lose the emotion. All three illustrated the Vienna of the early Twentieth Century, the Secession, an artistic movement that Klimt founded in 1897 and, Monnier adds, influenced other artists like Hundertwasser, even many years later. The exhibition is realized by Gianfranco Iannuzzi, Renato Gatto and Massimiliano Siccardi1.

And here goes the sensory experience: you enter a huge hall that little by little becomes dark, in 1,500 square meters, where hundreds of people are immersed, there are no chairs, only the floor. The light goes off, the music starts, Wagner, Strauss, Beethoven, Chopin, Mahler, Puccini and Philip Glass (fig. 2). And the projection of Klimt’s works starts on the ten-meter high walls, on the floor, and also on the spectators who are themselves part of the works of art. And the scene is certainly suggestive with so many works by Klimt that come alive (in part) and literally fill the space.

Then we start noticing that some portions of the projections are repeated in other areas of the museum in Tokyo is called MORI and seems dedicated to Gustav Klimt with a kind of full immersion (fig. 3). IANNUZZI, G., GATTO, R., SICCARDI, M., 2018. Gustave Klimt, une immersion dans l’art et la musique. Paris: Beaux Arts Edition & Culturespaces – Atelier des Lumières. And there the projections are repeated in other areas of the museum in Tokyo is called MORI and seems dedicated to Gustav Klimt with a kind of full immersion (fig. 3). IANNUZZI, G., GATTO, R., SICCARDI, M., 2018. Gustave Klimt, une immersion dans l’art et la musique. Paris: Beaux Arts Edition & Culturespaces – Atelier des Lumières.

Let’s take a step back. The public comes in, does not go to a traditional show, wants to experience an emotion. But something should however be done to understand the real works of Klimt. Klimt is, in one square meter – a film of the Austrian emperor Franz Joseph I in a carriage is shown (it is not clear what Hundertwasser has to do with this). The posters present a Klimt exhibition, but at a certain point small panels appear without any indication that they deal with Schiele’s works, then Hundertwasser’s, who is also present in a small round space in the centre of the large room, separate, for those who want to know more. And again here come the great images of Klimt to honour Beethoven’s Ninth and music starts. The show also includes a five minute digital art preview, which is interrupted as those interested can continue to follow the screening in a small room, the Studio, dedicated only to contemporary digital art.

What is the effect of all this sparkling sound and light? The duration is excessive, up to fifty minutes, while someone continue to lie on the ground, some start to go out. Sensations, experiences, should not be too long, even in a full immersion. Did anyone come out with the idea of wanting to see the original works of Klimt or Schiele? That is, an image has been done that is not understandable that some are works by Schiele. We are in a great space where school classes, families come, a great success in Paris. What were the expectations of those who did know Schiele?

Here is what Guérin observes: “The first thing that is the dematerialization of the work of art does not cease to gain ground in the art world (as is the case of pixelized Klimt) […]. Let’s leave aside the hairless art of the many who deal with playing with pixels. A large museum of the digitized network has just been opened in Tokyo1*. The Building Digital Art Museum in Tokyo is called MORI and seems to be interesting judging from the images in the web. It is a true full immersion in digital spaces that change almost at the speed of light and unlike the Paris experiences everything was created and designed exactly for that space. They are all new works created for the exhibition of the Atelier that consist in the projection of images digitalized of the great masters that are animated with the comment musical on immense superlatives, the public can sculp in a five minute digital art that have been painted in ten years ago. The image is a special experience sensorial. Non è una mostra tradizionale, i visitatori non si sentono come osservatori che stanno di fronte all’opera d’arte ma sono immersi dentro l’opera d’arte. L’esperienza sensoriale di un “bagno pittorico” è rafforzata dalla musica2.

Ci sono a disposizione 140 video proiettori ed un sistema sonoro ad effetto spaletto per questa immersione totale. Questo tipo di mostra, ricorda Monnier, risolve anche il problema del trasporto delle opere originali, problema cotonso e dedicato. Già, perché alla immersione experience è tutto tranne parole in loro originalità di dimensioni, tecniche, storia.

Quale è lo scopo che si vuole raggiungere? Aggiunge Monnier: “Ci siamo resi conto che i musei non interessano tutti (1). Con questa nuova tecnica possiamo attrarre chiunque, giovani e vecchi, per avvicinarli all’arte. Ovvero per spingerli ad essere poi interessati a visitare le mostre tradizionali”.

La prima esperienza sensoriale a Parigi, dopo alcuni anni in altre realtà francesi in città più piccole, è dedicata a Gustav Klimt con una specie di Klimt approccio. E poi si considerava un allievo di Klimt – e muo- nente, come prima materia, l’effetto was nasce in 1918, Hundertwasser. E si fa capire del periodo, e quindi su un piccolo schermo, sarà di un metro quadrato, è proiet- tatato una filmata dell’imperatore austriaco Franz Joseph I in carrozza (non è chiaro che c’entra Hundertwasser). I manifesti presenta- no la mostra di Klimt, ma ad un certo punto si parla di una terminazione non chiara e di un progetto di una grande musica. Il filmata può continuare a seguire la proiezione in una piccola sala, lo Studio, dedicata solo all’arte digitalizzata contemporanea.

Michele Emmer – A nulle immersion: Klimt a Parigi

success was built in a series of ‘immersive’ events that were not at all to be despised, as Guerrin thinks, adding: “Let’s leave aside the numerical approach to art, from the ArticCulture platform to the virtual mini-museums that allow visits to museums even to those who can not go there. The Klimt event is different. Digital is not a medium, it is the finished product. The copy replaces the original – mini digital installations, Sound Hidakahi Takahashi, MORI Digital Art Museum, Tokyo. Available at: https://borderless.teamlab.com/en/ew/ia-waterparticles/.

And even the Parc de la Villette in Paris, the temple of scientific popularization, welcomed the ‘immersive’ exhibition of van Gogh. For the moment, museums remain impervious to such events and resist in the defence of the originals. It is their reason to exist. But the museums know that when they are increasing the number of visitors, the public is broadening, as Guerrin rightly points out that while at the Louvre all young Europeans under the age of 25 do not pay the ticket, at the immersive Klimt exhibition, where there is not a single original work, the ticket is €14.50 for the full fare and 9.50 for young people from 5 to 25 years. He adds: “a detail that should make people consider as the price is an important factor that is not negligible. And Guerrin rightly points out that while at the Louvre all young Europeans under the age of 25 do not pay the ticket, at the immersive Klimt exhibition, where there is not a single original work, the ticket is €14.50 for the full fare and 9.50 for young people from 5 to 25 years. He adds: “a detail that should make people consider as the price is an important factor that is not negligible.

But what does the public see? A very entertaining installation and not an inert picture, a sort of film (and instead it is much more simply a series of slides with music). He underlined that at the end some of the few remaining applauded, many took digital pictures of a digital screen, which “caused a curious double-screen effect of the non-existent work.”

A similar effect occurred after the tragedy of the collapse of the Genoa bridge. I turned on the television, RAI News (State Italian television), it was August 13, 2018 and evidently the television, RAI News, was the only one on the place. The other television, RAI News, was the only one on the place, where People Gather and fake Klimt. Le Monde, Culture chronique. Sabato 2 giugno 2018, p. 22.

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half of the screen transmitted images, obviously still photos, taken from the websites of foreign newspapers that described the event. The images transmitted from the place of collapse were not enough, images of a private television, I repeat, but they had to be validated by what newspapers showed in other parts of the world, obviously watching those television images that were broadcast by Rai News on the right side of the screen. Returning to the ‘immersive’ exhibition the public knows nothing of the projected works. I had fun making believe I was a journalist going around the room and asking people who was that artist, in particular Schiele. Nobody knew anything about him. There were no texts or indications. Everyone can enjoy what he or she wants. Details, colours, but nothing is known of the work in its entirety, of the role, of the place. In many cases these are works painted on walls that obviously cannot be transported. The effect is decorative like wallpaper. Everything is decontextualized. And there is the case of Schiele. Obviously it is a popular exhibition which could not show the dramatic and scandalous nudes of Schiele to an audience who wants to see paintings. Of course not. Or the women in Klimt’s study drawings, who had been Schiele’s teacher? Because Klimt made 3,000 drawings and Schiele 4,000. Then what is being shown is a kind of Puritan art that must be purged of its origin, the traumas of its authors, what had upset them and their obsessions, as everything must be harmless decoration. It is no longer Klimt but something else, in which in the total immersion, in the sensorial perceptions, the sensations and the disturbances are filtered, or eliminated, forgetting that those years were in the great Vienna the years of Freud. And the story fades into a sublime digitized non-existence. It is important not to disturb, to generate sensations but without exaggerating, as the people may not understand. Does this style of presentation in this historical period that we are experiencing remind us of something? As a vehicle for a simplifying ideology in which everything is peaceful and positive, it suffices not to consider problems and to ask questions. And it may not be true that nobody will then go to New York (which is certainly far away) to see the original painting, the famous woman in gold (it is one of those that appears 10 meters tall in Paris, fig. 4) and understand of why that painting is there and not in Vienna, a fascinating story. Made in Vienna by Klimt in 1907, the portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer, a picture seized by the Nazis and baptized Woman in Gold in order not to use the Jewish name of the portrayed Jewish woman, returned in 2006 to Maria Altmann’s niece only after a long legal battle against the recalcitrant Austrian government. Sold with other Klimts to Ronald Lauer and it since been exhibited at the Neue Galerie in New York, as requested by Maria Altmann. Well, yes, the original. A small painting in reality it is not at all small for the standard of paintings, 138x138 cm but certainly it is compared to the dimensions of the immersive experience) which only by getting close to it can the golden leaves placed by the painter on the garments and the body of the woman be seen as well as the many Egyptian symbols of the eye of the god Horus (fig. 5). However at the Atelier des Lumières, that image can be seen 10 meters high, what more do you want? And when a young visitor arrives to see the original (fig. 5) will be not like the two-years little girl who after playing with a tablet expanding and moving images, will throw a book away since she could not move anything on its pages? It is a big problem of culture and knowledge. But history always does not end, because while the sensory exhibition in Paris triumphs, in New York, at the Metropolitan Museum in a separate building called Braver from the name of the architect who built it, not far from the main building but separate, and the choice is not random, the erotic drawings of nudes by Klimt, Schiele and Picasso are shown. A particular collection that has had many difficulties to be shown to the public given its very sensorially and emotionally engaging character. Also because what is completely lacking in the Klimt exhibition in Paris is the role of the imagination of the beholder, of the slow and widespread feeling that seeing those works of art as a vehicle for a simplifying ideology in which everything is peaceful and positive, it suffices not to consider problems and to ask
art generates, in their true dimensions, in the materiality of the works and images portrayed, nothing to do with the hit and run of the immense digitized images.

An exhibition called Obsession, obsession, the female nude and sex by the three artists and the collector, Scofield Thayer, who launched the famous literary magazine The Dial from 1912 to 1929, a temple of modernism in art and literature. Thayer had collected all those drawings and paintings between the Twenties and Thirties in Paris and Vienna where he had been a patient of Freud for two years, and subsequently dismissed, considered unreadable by Freud. Who then freed him by considering him an unrecoverable patient. There are also photos like the famous one by Klimt dressed in a long blue overcoat wandering around in his atelier where a certain number of nude models were never short of supply, in case the master got an inspiration. And we also see the drawings that in part the author himself modifies in his final works because they would have generated an even greater scandal. Egon Schiele was put in jail for allowing helpless children to run freely in his atelier, of a work of art.

Without any immersion, only the originals. They can disturb, elicit great emotions, endure over time. Better to be avoided and have fun as long as possible. I do not know what Luciano Emmer would have thought of the immersive exhibition. What is certain is that this type of exhibition and performance lacks the talent and creativity of the film artist who reinvented the images created hundreds of years ago, making it possible to grasp, while leaving space to the imagination of the beholder, the profound meaning that the artist painter had infused in his work. Perhaps Giotto’s purpose was to surprise by telling a story, and likewise that of Luciano Emmer, but it is the different tools used, the techniques, the material which create in both cases the reflective and fascination of a work of art.

Già, l’originale. Un piccolo quadro (in realtà non è affatto piccolo per lo standard dei quadri, 138 x 138 cm, ma certo lo è per le dimensioni dell’immersive experience) che avvicinandosi mette in mostra le foglie d’oro appogiate dal pittore sulle vesti e il corpo della donna e i tanti simboli egizi dell’occhio del dio Horus (fig. 5). Ma all’Atelier des Luces quella immagine di sveda alta 10 metri che cosa volete di più? E quando un giovane visitatore arriverà a vedere l’originale (7) non farà come quella piccola bambina di due anni che dopo aver giocato con il tablet si schiacciando e muovendo immagini, alla vista di un libro, lo getta via dato che non si muove nulla sulla sua superficie? E un grosso problema di cultura e di conoscenza. Ma la storia come sempre non finisce, perché mentre l’esposizione sensoriale a Parigi trionfà, a New York, al Metropolitan Museum nel sedile distaccata chiamata Brauer dal nome dell’architetto che la ha realizzata, non torna mai a New York. Nella mostra del Metropolitan Museum, New York 2018.

Figure 6. E. Schiele, Standing Nude with Orange Drapery, watercolor, graphite and graphite on paper, 46.4x30.5 cm, 1914. Cover of the exhibition catalogue at the Metropolitan Museum, New York 2018.