

BOHEMIA LIES BY THE SEA

Practising discontinuity, imagining otherwise

In a present marked by uncertainty, the relationship with time becomes unstable: the future, rather than opening up as a horizon of possibility, is perceived as a broken promise; the past, invested with reparative and nostalgic expectations, returns instead as a space of projection and refuge. Within this backward turn, it becomes urgent to question not only what we look at, but also the ways in which time is conceived and lived, calling into question the recourse to nostalgia as a mode of orientation and as an automatic response to the instability of the present.

Within the hegemony of nostalgia that permeates politics, media, and lifestyles, the past is frequently mobilised as a reassuring image to return to, or as a model to be imitated in order to withdraw from the complexity of the present. Through the selection and idealisation of what has been, nostalgia operates as a device that determines what can be remembered, simplifies conflicts, normalises fractures, and restricts the field of what can be imagined. By saturating the collective imaginary, it offers the illusion of shelter while simultaneously contributing to a climate in which uncertainty and anxiety become resources readily mobilised for collective orientation.

In a climate traversed by antagonisms and resentments, anxiety functions as a technology of governance, capable of rendering subjects more obedient, vulnerable to coercion, and easily orientable, placing the future itself in quarantine and depriving it of the possibility of being conceived. It is from this impasse that nostalgia can be counter-appropriated: not as a desire for return, but as a gesture that looks backwards in order to restore — or, at times, to grant for the first time — space and visibility to what has been selectively relegated to the margins by hegemonic narratives. It is within this reopening that time begins to move again, making the idea of a future that is not already prescribed newly traversable.

To hope, today, can be understood as a movement that does not evade the obstacle while waiting for a better outcome, but instead assumes it as the condition of possibility for a different gesture. Rejecting both evasion and adaptation, hoping does not promise solutions, but introduces a deviation. As in the jump of Dick Fosbury, it looks at the obstacle, runs towards it, confronts it, and, for a brief moment, turns its back on it in order to overcome it. This unexpected mode of movement affirms, through interruption, the urgency of changing the vantage point from which the contemporary world is approached. Such a torsion becomes a tool for introducing discontinuity into a linear time perceived as untameable, countering a condition of reflective impotence that has become systemic and endemic.

Hope thus ceases to take the form of a future projection and asserts itself as a situated act: a practice that restores complexity and depth to the present and offers a strategy for *staying with the trouble*. Far removed from any promise of salvation or resolution, it manifests as an attitude that accepts opacity, contradiction, and incompleteness not as flaws to be overcome, but as conditions to work with. Hope does not point to an escape route; rather, it proposes a way of remaining at the threshold, transforming uncertainty from a paralysing limit into a field of operative possibilities.

As in Fosbury's jump, hope does not circumvent the obstacle: it takes it on as the pivot around which an emancipatory movement can be articulated. It shifts its alignment, activates a counterintuitive gesture that does not erase the limin, but crosses it along a trajectory previously unconsidered. In this deviation, hope produces a rupture in the status quo, creating the conditions for practices capable of misaligning, deviating, and reorienting the present.

The fifth edition of Biennale Internazionale Donna takes shape within the fracture through which the rays of nostalgia pass into the present. Within this fissure, the Biennale interposes a lens capable of reorienting the gaze, rewriting the cartography of the present, and reactivating what imagination had left suspended. It is from this threshold that the title of the edition takes form.

Bohemia Lies by the Sea emerges as a figure through which to interrogate the relationship between utopia, time, and imagination. More than pointing to a geographical paradox, the title evokes a constellation of thought that runs through William Shakespeare, is taken up by Franz Fühmann, and finds a decisive formulation in Ingeborg Bachmann. Along this trajectory, Bohemia does not present itself as a destination or a promise of salvation, but as an elsewhere conceivable only in its instability: a fictional horizon, fragile and never fully graspable, that makes it possible to imagine an alternative condition. It is precisely within this tension that Bohemia asserts itself as a critical device, capable of reactivating the very idea of an alternative and of unsettling what, in the present, appears inevitable.

Far removed from any notion of return or restoration, *Bohemia Lies by the Sea* sets out to investigate forms of memory and memorialisation that operate through fragments and provisional wholes, partial returns, and reactivations. Through artistic practices that work with missing archives, broken genealogies, surviving gestures, and unrealised possibilities, the Biennale becomes a space in which memory is translated into action. Not as an exercise in repetition, but as a practice capable of recovering what has been denied or interrupted, recomposing relations, and restoring complexity to simplified histories; so that what has been is not reproduced, but placed under tension and transformed in the very process of its becoming.

From this perspective, the present opens up as a field of tensions within which to articulate politics *after the future*, grounded not in the promise of progress, but in the care of the present: in the rebuilding of trust, in vulnerability, in the capacity to remain within uncertainty. These are politics that pass through the recomposition of sensibility, slowness, poetry, and the body, opening onto new forms of affective and linguistic autonomy.

The challenge lies in interrupting the race, withdrawing from the illusions of modernity and linear progress. It is a gesture that rejects anticipation as a form of temporal governance and demands attention, care, and the renunciation of easy salvific promises. In this pausing, in slowing down and remaining, it becomes possible to learn how to orient oneself without stable maps and to recognise the latent potential of lingering. It is from here that it once again becomes possible to believe that Bohemia lies by the sea.

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