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The Art of Creating Other Worlds

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I met Toni around 2005 in Paris. At that time, fresh out of my doctorate, I had found myself, I don't know quite how, on the editorial board of *Multitudes* magazine, where Judith Revel, whom for family reasons I had known since childhood, was also. And indeed, it is impossible for me to think of Toni without thinking of her, with whom he lived for almost thirty years. "Judith and Toni" (to be pronounced "judìtettòni") was almost a magic formula for me, capable of materializing chats and laughter, endless discussions about politics, art and philosophy, but also dinners, trips, vacations. And above all, a door always open, even in messes, contradictions and separations. So, when I met Toni for the first time, I actually already knew him. Not only as a philosopher and politician - obvious - but as that person Judith told us about, who had met him I think in the early 1990s. I used to listen to her fascinated telling us about this person who seemed really out of the ordinary and with whom she was perhaps already falling in love. I remember one time in particular when my father, in a twist of fate, went and picked up his vintage copy of *Il Dominio e il Sabotaggio* to give it to her, embarrassed and amused. I, who knew nothing about it, was stunned by that title and pamphlet that had escaped my many forays into the home library.

When I started meeting them together, they lived between Paris and Venice, where I would gladly visit, not least to see the Biennale. Toni was not much interested in contemporary art - and how can you blame him - and although we happened to take a ride together to the Biennale, his was a distracted, at times amused stroll. He looked with detachment at the becoming of art, in its often superficial rituals and its being both "commodity and activity." While Toni was not overly interested in the most current forms of the artwork, he had, however, grasped a central aspect of contemporary art production as a ground for experimentation with "other worlds," as he wrote in his *Arte e Multitudo*. In this little book, written almost for fun but with the theoretical depth that was congenial to him, Toni noted the way in which art is not to be considered as a separate sphere from production processes, but as something that always stands within the "historicity of being together." For those who, like him, had based their political praxis on condivision and collective dimensions, there could be no sympathy for the artist as a figure of singularity, even less for the "great artist," a patriarchal legacy with deadly effects.

However, perhaps precisely because of this distance to the art world, I think that Toni never took too seriously the importance of reflections in the artistic sphere. The numerous invitations to speak as part of exhibitions, museums or art events, as well as the fact that several artists directly engaged with his thought and political affair (I am thinking of Rossella Biscotti, Angela Melitopoulos or Oliver Ressler, to name a few) attest to a constant dialogue between two worlds that were not so obvious to meet. It seems to me that Toni's writings, far beyond his sporadic interventions on art, in fact represent an inexhaustible source of ideas and methods for thinking about those "other worlds," those

unprecedented and unforeseen forms of life that art itself is called upon to imagine and experiment with.

Now that Toni has died, I re-read with emotion the last pages of his autobiography in which he reflects on the phenomenology of the present precisely from this inexhaustible longing for a world woven into the common, into relationships, into the joy of life. I had not grasped the full scope of these reflections at the time of publication, which strike me as resonant with the catastrophic events of recent weeks. We should not be afraid, Toni writes, because we are on the side of life and fear makes us subservient to the fascist logic of war. In this moment of bewilderment in the face of the world's violence, this remains for me Toni's most important legacy, which is as political as it is existential.

Ciao Toni. We miss you already, but you live on in our thoughts and struggles.