

From: Domenico Scudero & Luigi Billi, questions for Richard Deacon for 'O'- Opening Magazine, December 1993 Issue.

1. You have a great interest in public sculpture. We read in your book 'Richard Deacon'(Editions du Regard, Paris 1992') that you give a special meaning to the word 'public'. Can you explain to us about this?

-It seems to me that when we talk about public art or public space there are two ways in which we use the word public. The first has to do with social engineering and in a certain sort of way with things that are good to do, as in public health, public transport, public housing. With this sense of the word the idea of public art becomes a bit virtuous, rather like muesli for breakfast. You know it's doing you good. The second sense, and the sense that I am interested in has to do with commonality, of the public domain as against the private. In this sense what is in public is inalienably ours. The public space is the space in which we are able to become what we are as people and in which we can talk to each other. It is not just the space left behind by private interests.

2. In recent years you've been making works for public spaces. Do these works bear a relationship to the environment (both natural and human) for which they were commissioned?

-The conditions of the particular space that I am working for have been important factors for me, whether in formal terms or in relation to the human and environmental context. However autonomy has also been an issue and I have not made work using the strict sense of site specificity that Richard Serra, for example, applies to his work.

3. In many works you use poetic titles – like *Between Fiction And Fact*, *Nose To Nose – Beginning To End*. These are usually works living as 'abstract lines' between modern architectural contexts. Is the poetic title a polemic against the 'ratio' of modernism or only that you suggest that the sculpture is itself 'language'?

-I don't think of sculpture as language itself, but I do think that language is paradigmatically public in the sense that I tried to articulate in the first answer. Language belongs to us all. It is also a partner in our most intimate thoughts. In many ways we live in language. My use of titling tries to point to this commonality: *Nobody Here But Us*; *Let's Not Be Stupid*, as well as to

this quality of being in language and in the world: *Nose To Nose - Beginning To End; Between Fiction And Fact*.

In relation to the second part of your question, I find modernism interesting, but it's over now.

4. Do you mean that your work has ways to stir a spiritual resonance in the onlookers?

-Spiritual is a word I've always had a lot of trouble with, I don't believe in ghosts. I do think that it is possible to construct meaning out of physical substances and I do think that the appreciation of meaning involves negotiations with the self on the part of the spectator. Ideally this begins involuntarily - resonance is a good word for it. The connection that is thus established between the animate and the inanimate has a lot of the characteristics of magic and the supernatural.