

STEFANO VELOTTI

## Preface

The theme of the essays collected here – *Caring for the Future. The Social Value of Artistic Practices* – was proposed before the great trauma of the COVID-19 pandemic. There is no doubt that this global trauma, which is affecting all the inhabitants of the planet in different ways, marks a break, not a parenthesis to be reabsorbed into “normality”. However, the pandemic has put under the magnifying glass problems that were already very much present in the global public debate before the pandemic manifested itself. The term “care”, proposed in the title of this collection, has become a fashionable term, which risks being emptied of meaning, as has already happened with another term that has become much overused, that of “sustainability”. However, care and sustainability are fundamental issues, which we cannot allow to be emptied, and which aesthetic-philosophical reflection must contribute to articulating and understanding.

We believe that contemporary artistic practices can still represent today – or perhaps today more than ever – models capable of revealing jammed social mechanisms, of critiquing them, and of bearing witness to alternative social models. Some artistic practices (works, performances, “events”, time-long projects, etc.) often have clear social and political intentions. However, they sometimes limit themselves to illustrating a position that has already been formulated, exhausting themselves in more or less agreeable statements, but abdicating the more complex social function of art. The “laboratory” of artistic practices is not proposed as a solution to correct our social and cultural dysfunctions, but rather as a term of comparison useful for better diagnosing the present and for imagining places, times, and forms of life that can borrow some of their characteristics from it.

In their apparent heterogeneity, all the essays written for this volume of *Paradigmi* address, more or less directly, the proposed theme: questioning the work of some of the great protagonists of the last century, or examining the status of the new emerging media, their liberating potential and the regressive risks they entail. What potential does virtual and augmented

reality hold? What role can museums play after their passage through institutional critique? Can they still be places for the elaboration of collective consciousness, heterotopias embedded in the fabric of ordinary life, or are they too succumbing to the logic of the market, so powerful and omnivorous in all spheres of life? How does our geopolitical perception change according to our ways of mapping space? In what ways are artistic practices affected by the pandemic crisis? What role will the various elaborations of the Anthropocene, the growing focus on the non-human world, play in taking care of our future?

These are some of the questions that run through the essays in this volume and which we hope will contribute to a better understanding of the role of artistic practices in our complicated and uncertain contemporary world.