



Exhibition «Through labyrinths»
27/07/2010 – 09/01/2011

From labyrinth to web

The labyrinth is an artificial form that has become a universal symbol. It is probably a good expression of one of the most recurrent feelings of human beings: the sense of having gone astray, of being lost, of not managing to get on course in a life that is, at many points, overwhelming. The unicursal labyrinth – one path, one exit – might be attributed with a certain deterministic representation. In spite of everything life runs along a defined course. In the multicursal labyrinth – different paths, more than one exit, several cul-de-sacs – we might see the contradictions of free will. We can choose, we can err but, in the end, the routes are still quite well marked. The labyrinth at once disconcerts and envelops. It disorients yet soothes. There is a way out.

Jorge Luis Borges describes how the king of Babylon bade an Arab king to enter a labyrinth “where he wandered humiliated and confused until the coming of evening”. Years later, the Arab king took the Babylonian king captive. “He tied him to a swift-footed camel and led him into desert. After riding three days he said, ‘Oh king of time and substance, and cipher of the century, in Babylon it was your pleasure to thrust me into a labyrinth of bronze with many stairways, doors and walls. Now the Powerful One sees fit to let me show you mine, where there are no stairs to climb, no doors to force, no exhausting corridors to walk, or walls to block the way’. He then untied his bonds and left him in the middle of the desert where he died of hunger and thirst.” Desert as labyrinth with an infinite number of paths: Borges’ metaphor endures. In this catalogue Umberto Eco raises the question of a third form of labyrinth: the Web, Internet. The immensity of electronic space weaving an infinite number of routes. It is true that the paths of the Web are entangled and we are often lost among them and, if I may be permitted a play on words, we leave it before finding the exit. However, we might say that the Web has no physical form while the labyrinth and the desert do. Yet, there is mystery, disorientation and losing the way in all of them.

This exhibition is an incursion into the symbolic and physical history of the labyrinth and it has resonances with another exhibition that was also held within these walls, *Requiem for the Staircase*, directed by Oscar Tusquets. The object then was a basic architectural form – the staircase – one that is also loaded with sense and meanings, whose image is linked with key moments in the history of art and cinema, from representations of Jacob’s Ladder to Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*, to recall a couple of obvious examples. From the architectural point of view, the labyrinth pertains more to landscape than to the house, more to the garden than to a room. And it has a dimension of play, of gratuitousness. We know that this character of non-necessity is an essential component of aesthetic emotions.

With Ramon Espelt and Oscar Tusquets, we have found a balance between knowledge and form, cognizance and aesthetic ideas. An exhibition has thus been constructed so that, like labyrinths, it invites one to a range of experiences, from aesthetics and philosophy to diversion and play. It is archaeology that gives us clues as to the permanence of this myth in which the Minotaur is the emblematic figure.