

Reflection on the theme of the XII edition of the PLAY DAY

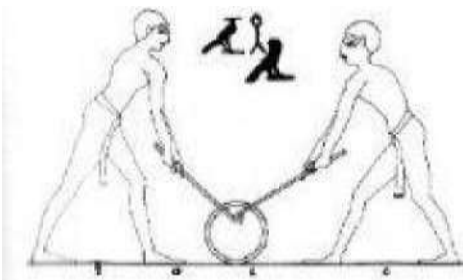
GIOCOTONDO: PLAY IN CIRCLE

The circle is the perfect geometric figure. It has neither a starting point, nor an ending place; there is no beginning or ending, and all the points are equidistant from a single focal point called center.

Many assume it is the universal symbol of balance and harmony. Metaphorically it represents the perpetual circle of life, or that perfect form that, in every culture and religion, is the symbol of spirituality and immateriality, in contrast to the square (divine creation).

In architecture it expresses harmony. In fact we have a lot of architectural constructions dating back to ancient times. Many of them depart from its subdivision, the arch. Also for nomads, the temple for the divinity was conceived as a circular form, similar to their tent. In order to delimit the sanctuary, they put a stick on the ground and interpreted it as the axis of the world and every point about the Earth's surface was thought to correspond to this axis. With a wire bound to the stick, they made it rotate, drawing the circle that was the symbolical transformation of the sky and the cosmos.

Since ancient times, from the Babylonians to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance as well as in several Indian tribes of America, the circle has been given a magical value. The circle is a curved and dynamical shape that recalls the idea of smooth and round movements in space. All features have made it the favorite plaything for children and adults; for this reason the twelfth edition of the Game Day 2017 is dedicated to this form.



The oldest raffiguration of the circle used as a hoop dates back to the times of Egyptians. In the tomb of Roti at Beni-Hassan we can see a painting representating two men intent in contending a hoop by means of a hooked stick. It is very simple to imagine and assume that the game consisted in rolling the hoop with the sticks or launch and catch it with the same stick. Many other evidences are also found in subsequent eras. It was called "Trochos" by the Greeks

(form the verb 'trecho' /to stir/ - throug impulses: the trochos was put in motion by the intermittent blows of a metallic rod. This rod had the shape of a "Rabdos" also called "Clovis" on some Greak and Roman inscriptions on vases. At one end, it had such a swelling that it looked like a key. On a piece of Hellenic pottery we can see two young guys interrupting their games while running away from the threats of Eros: the first guy abandons the spinning top and the ribbon used to make it spin; the other guy is taking his precious trachos and the rod. This game was very important also for the American-Indians. It represented a great means to develop the sense of precision.

Until recently, when kids used to play in the streets and squares, it was almost impossible not to meet at least one kid running after a hoop or a spherical object that derived from the circle. Today, the hoop is one of the five tools mostly used in dynamic gymnastics. It was one of the most widespred games for kids.



The logo of the Olympic Games is represented by five intersecting rings that represent the union of the five continents. Also the five colours are associated to them (blue, yellow, black, green and red). There is also white in the background. All the colours were chosen by Pierre De Coubertin because they had been used in all the flags of the world until then. For common people, in the form of a ring, a bracelet, a necklace, a belt or a crown, it represents a magic protector.

To take the form of the circle with our bodies in the space is a ritual but also a the most widespread game, or a twisting dance that consists in turning around while kids hold their hands while singing a doggerel that starts with the words "Giro giro tondo" also called "Ring around the roses". It continues in different ways depending on the different regions we consider. The functioning of the carousel and the spinning tops are also based on the circle, the repeating, tortuous rotation around an axis.

For ancient people, gathering in circle to discuss, to dance to share and play was a daily attitude. The circle of people signified that no one is excluded and that everyone has the right to give shape and soul to the circle; people can look at each other in the eye and have equal worth. There are no desks or tables dividing people: just a fire or a candle in the middle that links them all (the circle represents a point of reference). People gathered in a circle may take many interesting meanings, that is why it is good to take into consideration this ancient form of relationship.



"Playing in circle", hence "playing with the the hoop", can represent the archaic way to connect to nature, to the shape of the sun and the moon, apparently contrasting but naturally complementary elements in the mandalas of Tibetan monks and in the essential aspects of life. The circle can include everyone, it has neither a direction, nor an orientation, it expresses an internal space that hasn't any connection with the outside, that's why it is also a symbol of protection and defence.

Gathering in circle let people and structures join together, express, and know each other, valorizing differences, making inclusiveness easier, without hierarchical temptations. In circles we rank with the same dignity, we play to search a common goal, we embrace and protect a shared heritage, we make a step back to be more hospitable and the position we occupy is not important. Circling around means to give up one's own centrality and become open to everyone's cause, accepting the others without conditions. The circle is: wheel, movement, energy, flow, cycle, continuity, sun, earth, seed... LIFE and PLAY.

Then the invitation for the XII edition of 'Play's Day' chiefly consists in choosing the form and structure of the circle and hoop to play while feeding the growing the precious seed of support and relationship. This year, in order to celebrate the annual festival of Play, we shall organize a game with a big hoop. It will be an important occasion and we shall realize it whether the sun will shine or not. Outdoors or indoors, with few or many people, in silence or uproar, with our eyes closed or open, sitting or standing, we all shall participate in a show centred on dancing in circle. We shall feel its profound emotions only taking part to it.

(Arch. Francesco Langella)