

Umberto Eco on the school project and the video production of Luigi Nono's "Il Canto sospeso"

"The history of 50 years ago is prehistory. And if anybody reminds today's young people about it in order to deny it, in order to say it didn't happen, there are at least 15 web-sites in the internet, inspired by this revisionism, which deny the reality of the Holocaust in words and pictures. The young people experience every day how TV and computer programmes can re-process reality. History as we remember it and experienced it appears to young people as a Hollywood legend, in which General Custer, Buffalo Bill, Indiana Jones, Hitler and Mussolini are mixed into one.

What is true: Auschwitz or Bladerunner's City? Where history can no longer convince us and gets mixed in with legend, art can tell us the truth again. I wish "Il Canto sospeso" could be shown to young people in schools all over the world. Then they would understand that what they saw and heard on the video actually happened.

Perhaps they would feel our ill-ease and fears that it can happen again. They would learn to recognise the new signs of intolerance, fanaticism, brutality and bestiality – because the new enemy does not show himself with shaven head, black or brown shirt and a Swastika on the sleeve. That would be a sad, limited folklore.

The new enemy is in disguise – sometimes in a double-breasted suit, sometimes he speaks the same language as Coca Cola, not the language as the Nibelungs. He doesn't grind his teeth, he smiles. He doesn't call on us to go to war, but to be happy. And yet he still calls for us to hate those that are different, to hate reason and the virtue of silence. In order to be ready to speak and to scream, every time when it is necessary, today and in the future, I invite you to be silent for a few seconds, in order to be ready and to speak the way the "Il Canto sospeso" has taught us."