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# **CRACKING THE SYSTEM**

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QUAM 2010

**Art  
and Citizenship  
open source  
in public realm**

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## **BETWEEN THE CRACKS:** **Citizenship and open source art practice**

The city, as a public space, is a welcoming, sheltering place, a place for negotiation and conflict, integration and expulsion, shared spaces and spaces to be taken over, quality of life and segregation, creativity and destruction, agreements and revolution, transit and residence, solitude and community. It is, above all, a place where everyone living there exercises citizenship.

Artistic practices affecting space social are inextricably linked to the city and social and cultural policies. All these elements maintain a relationship of dependency and mutual involvement. Taking this as a premise, we discuss the concept of citizenship from the perspective of artistic practices operating within social space, whether in the fields of action, representation or participation, and in relation to other agencies which analyse citizenship in its social and political contexts.

The condition of citizenship is subject to conflict. Without awareness of identity, of belonging to a group with social, cultural and political common objectives, there is no conflict. The rapidly changing scenery of our cities, with a visible presence of ethnic and cultural multiplicity in public space, causes social mobilisation to redefine the condition of citizenship to reach new spaces for representation. The local-global/ national-worldwide connection, affects the logic of citizenship with an expanded perspective, but also affects artistic practices seeking in the city, a place for action.

Creative and artistic practices often lack a relationship with social context; these practices also have little presence in education, something which is not helpful in resolving the conflict in communication between such practices and the general audiences.

Open source, in this context, refers to the possibility of a shared modification, a common construction of meanings and representations in the complex and mutable social context of the city.

The exploratory lines of work in Quam 2010, contained in this publication, are drawn around two specific points:

- Experiments advancing alternatives to conflict between citizenship and artistic practice.
- Artistic practices which encourage relationship-building in social space, through mediation, interaction and participation.

Between the cracks: Citizenship and open source art practices arise from the crossing point between two perspectives which are not always connected: artistic practices and social-cultural practices.

Artistic practices promote strategies or applicable guidelines which may take the form of cultural or social policies, indicating a number of possible proposals, starting by bringing latent situations out into the open, and subsequently carrying the solutions to term.

## Artistic practices, intermediate zones and social utility

### Utility in artistic practices

Contemporary arts practices cover a wide range of techniques, tactics, strategies, attitudes and positions, carried out using different vehicles which display unique nuances and even structural innovations, making these practices possible on the levels of production, research, distribution, the building of new audiences (users, participants) or education. Despite their diversity, we may define these vehicles for bringing together contemporary arts practices as three groups based upon production and financing: one group led by public institutions (or semi-private institutions financed mainly from public funds), another group channelled through the arts market (brokers and producers marketing artworks), and a self-managed group (led by producers-promoters). Many current projects combine different vehicles so that "artistic practice" may be produced, communicated, distributed, consumed, or socialised in different areas.

In the current economic crisis, which has grown exponentially since 2008, things have been changing substantially, the ecosystem comprising these three groups of "productive" vehicles suffering the consequences, and all the more severely when these practices depend largely on public funding. Artistic practices channelled through the art markets are also affected, since a great deal of this market is controlled by public institutions themselves (museums, art centres), which in many cases are financially backing the production of artworks. With regard to the private market, it constitutes a particular area which combines many other factors such as private collection, altruism, patronage or money laundering, and in this case we are interested in the socialisable value which such practices promote, or the potential which they have to be socialised.

In this context of the crisis of public values, self-managed practices are clearly liberated and in a certain way take on a role of major importance. A large component of self-management has always been present in art production; it is a practice which often takes place in a context of informal economy, and is self-financed by the same actors who promote it. In this new scenario for production, alternative forms of financing are appearing, such as Crowd-funding, which combine self-management with individual contributions through various networking sites, even

though their organisational structures subsist by means of public resources.

Since 2010, the consequences of this crisis in the Spanish context have been clearly displayed, and point to the configuration of a new scenario. Within the fields of public administration and civil society, one of the most repeated questions put to anyone proposing a new project based on contemporary art practices is: what use is it? It is a question basically asked to justify the maintenance of a budget for this sort of thing, and what will its return be to the community (or to society).

In fact it is the utility of contemporary art practices which is in question, pointing, with increasing explicitness, to the deep gulf between contemporary artistic practices and the people. When a justification is required for art's social utility, a recurrent term is referred to: art as a tool. A tool to help people deal with life and the human condition, a tool of mediation in a socially disadvantaged context, an educational tool, a tool which can help improve quality of life, a tool to facilitate social cohesion, a cross-disciplinary tool which helps to build bridges in situations of conflict resolution, a tool which gives symbolic meaning to a particular context, a tool of communication, propaganda, innovation, visibility, a tool of participation, a tool which encourages critical thinking and aesthetic enjoyment, etc..

Any tool can be used, and may function, in many different ways. A screwdriver, for example, apart from tightening and loosening screws, is essential when used on various materials, with ingenuity, creativity or for a specific purpose, serving to construct (repair) furniture, motors, electrical circuits, appliances, homes, etc.. Furthermore, the practice of art as a tool is multifunctional, its utility generated according to the user, the specific situation, the objectives sought and the participants in the creative action.

One of the functions traditionally assumed by culture (and especially by art) is associated with the idea of controlling perception of the world, and to enter a realm of experimentation and critical analysis in relation to social space. Right now there are new actors in the management of cultural policies, influenced by neoliberal strategies, proposing schedules derived from market needs, interested in increasing audiences, converting cultural activities into arenas

of entertainment, by promoting cultural tourism and activities on demand. This entails a major change in the relationship between cultural policies and artistic production, understanding this artistic production as a structure embedded within the relationship between the individual, the collective and the transition from a type of society which has touched rock-bottom to wards a new one society which must be put together.

"When culture is no longer a tool for the design, construction and maintenance of social order, cultural things are seized and taken to auction to be acquired by the highest bidder."<sup>1</sup> This quotation is from a dialogue between Zygmunt Bauman and Maaretta Jaukkuri before the outbreak of the current crisis. Recently this idea of culture as a tool or as a public service is being abandoned, the same as with other social benefits, such as health and education. This is being accelerated by the instability affecting most governments, due to their inability to control the resultant chaos caused by global capitalism, a prevalent condition in most countries, especially those belonging to the European Union.

This serious current situation is characterised by a formula supported by "market liberalisation, deregulation of the economy, and especially of the financial sector, the privatisation of state assets, low taxes and the minimum possible public expense."<sup>2</sup> The inability to control the crisis by political powers is evident, furthermore when most rights won over years, and structures which were part of the welfare state, are either directly endangered or disappearing entirely from public budgets. Structures and vehicles for art and culture are the hardest to justify their existence in a society in which unemployment rates continue to grow and where job insecurity is expanding at a rapid pace.

It may be considered that in a less tense social context, it might be easier to argue and justify the purpose and meaning of artistic practice, but even

1. Zygmunt Bauman speaks with Maaretta Jaukkuri: "Liquid Times, liquid art", in BAUMAN, Zygmunt. "Art, liquid?" Sequitur Ediciones, Madrid, 2007. Dialogue first published in 2007 by the National Academy of Arts in Bergen, Norway. KHIB, Bergen 2007.

2. LANCHESTER, John. "¡Huy! Porqué todo el mundo debe a todo el mundo y nadie puede pagar".(Whoops! Why Everyone Owes Everyone and No One Can Pay.) Editorial Anagrama, Barcelona 2010.

in times of economic stability, these arguments have been a persistent issue. Those involved in artistic practices, while an important part of the cultural sphere, have struggled to explain what functions they perform, which needs they cover, which services they provide, and to which audiences or collectives they address themselves. In terms of connection (more integration, less exclusion) of artistic practices with society (the territory), it still remains to define concepts, activities and cultural policies which articulate this connection.

When we propose that art can play a mediating and cross-disciplinary role within specific contexts, which may cooperate with other social or cultural agents with similar goals but different methodologies, we are proposing possible alternatives which can bridge the gap between art and society. To shorten these distances, right now, is a priority and is essential in generating a new context.

When evaluating cultural activity in general and art in particular, and in deciding policies based upon purely quantitative indicators (audience, spectators, return on investment ...), it is evident that the criteria applied are modeled purely upon market objectives. The same criteria which have been revived during recent decades and from which perspective, social space is considered as the sum of individual consumers.

The concept of Utility, qualitatively understood, cannot be quantified by purely numerical indicators. Utility, in economics, is the ability of a good or service to satisfy a need. A need is a desire which a person has for a good or service. Broadly, utility is equivalent to wellbeing and satisfaction, therefore it is a subjective value, a capricious response to tastes, preferences and desires (of consumers - users - participants). The same combination of benefits will obtain a different utility (satisfaction), according to the tastes and desires of each person. Goods or services are useful, whether a person prefers to possess them or not<sup>3</sup>. From this premise it follows that the higher the consumption of goods, the greater the satisfaction.

3. Different glossaries on fundamentals of economics refer to the concept of Utility, for example those in the University of Havana webpage: [http://www.uh.cu/sitios/cult\\_econom/glossary/u\\_v\\_w](http://www.uh.cu/sitios/cult_econom/glossary/u_v_w) or the wikipedia definitions: [http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utilidad\\_\(economics\)](http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utilidad_(economics))

From the perspective of cultural and artistic practices, if we measure the utility only by the number of individual users (consumers), we ignore all reference to the socialisation of goods or services derived from them<sup>4</sup>. We cannot understand the social utility as the sum of individual utilities. The sum of individual benefits is not the sum of social benefits, as in order to be a social benefit, regulation is required to balance common interests, and also collective action is required to build and satisfy common interests.

To enhance quality of life, to develop people's social skills, to improve their relationship with the environment and to enhance creativity, these, perhaps, are among the utilities we might hope for. A hope which must be cultivated, not so much in the sense of consuming, but from the need to build something new in which the citizen may participate in a shared desire for transformation. We propose here two changes in the evaluation system of cultural and artistic practices: to incorporate qualitative indicators which allow clear objectives to be set in different artistic practices, in order to evaluate these practices more easily; and to work alongside other disciplines and in different fields (which need not belong to the world of culture). These changes are intended to join together the desire and satisfaction applied to social space, and to increase utility from a kind of "expanded art practices" which satisfy the sum of collective interests (desires). In a context of social dismantling, resulting from the limited responsibility of public administrations, now deficit-ridden and indebted, alternatives promoted by the public and generated within collective contexts must be greatly strengthened. Self-management may be understood not only as a survival mechanism, but also as a mechanism of militancy.

### Positioning in adversity

4. The economy of culture supposes a field of work which is concerned with the application of theory and economic analysis on the problems of art and cultural practices. Tools of economics operate in cultural and artistic activities, from production, exchange, consumption and welfare. (MARCHIARO, Pancho. "Inconsciente colectivo. Producir y gestionar cultura desde la periferia". Universidad Pascal, Córdoba, 2007. pp 421-422).VV.AA. (2007) (Collective Unconsciousness: Producing and managing culture from the periphery. Foundation ABACO/Univ. UBP. (Chapter 1)) It is not the aim of this text to enter the specific field of economy despite referring to terms proper to it.

These changes and alternatives remain incipient in the artistic sphere, and we find ourselves in front of an adverse prospect. A prospect of adversity in which it is necessary to find ways in which cultural practices, art, take on an active, purposeful role, addressed to alleviate a situation which existing institutions cannot solve, whether for economic, ecological, social or political reasons. We confront a long-term change which will affect and transform our society. Many writers who analyse the reasons for, and the consequences of, the crisis in which we find ourselves, coincide (Neil Smith, Raj Patel, Joseph E. Stiglitz, Alain Touraine, Ramon Fernandez Duran). Virtually all agree that the current situation posits an open future, no return, in which the solutions or the results may end up in conflict.

"It could be chaos which evokes strong (or stronger) state repression, or may be chaos from which arise very real alternatives for social organisation"<sup>5</sup>. The geographer Neil Smith argues that the urban future is open, and an air of equality and hope must circulate, leaving aside apathy and cynicism. To Raj Patel, a true picture of the world can never be seen through the lens of the market, which makes it necessary to regain the right to have rights, the right to participation, the capacity for social commitment, ultimately generating an active movement within society to regain the power which the market economy has seized, and to restore democracy. "To restore politics, we will have to have more imagination, more creativity and courage"<sup>6</sup>.

For Stiglitz<sup>7</sup> this is the time to propose the society we want, and to think about whether we are creating the economy to bring us to these aspirations. Stiglitz argues that we must create a new economic system which generates employment, a financial system at the service of the human being, in which to reduce

5. SMITH, Neil. "Cities after neoliberalism??" in VVAA. After Neoliberalism: Cities and Systemic Chaos. Contemporary Art Museum of Barcelona - Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona 2009. p.29

6. PATEL, Raj. The Value of Nothing. How to Reshape Market Society and Redefine Democracy. Los Libros del Lince, Barcelona mayo 2010. p.208

7. STIGLITZ, Joseph E. "Caída libre. El libre mercado y el hundimiento de la economía mundial". Santillana Ediciones Generales SL, Madrid 2011. Freefall: America, Free Markets, and the Sinking of the World Economy W. W. Norton & Company Publishers, 2010

the gap between those who have little and those who have much, and above all to build a new society in which each individual can develop her potential in a community respectful of the planet. For Stiglitz, the real danger is not to take the opportunity of current times.

Alain Touraine makes it clear that there is no possible internal solution to the crisis. Touraine sees two possible routes, one towards the European catastrophe, unable to reform and control financial transactions. A world in which the links between economy and society have been broken by globalisation and in which no one manages to exercise control. The second, more optimistic, is based upon the consolidation of the defence of universal human rights as the only way. This way consists of using the mutation from one society to another, beginning with new social and cultural movements, "considering the capacity of human beings to build, thanks to language, artistic representations, and the creation of a "future", considering the source of their own creativity, as the guarantors of their own rights<sup>8</sup>.

There is a common thread in appealing to inherent human creativity as one of the essential elements for a graceful resurgence in front of adversity. A creativity which must be worked upon, and expanded into different areas, and which must manifest itself as social creativity, brought together through collective actions with potentially shared goals.

In a radical way, by analysing the recent past and the "catastrophic" present for the planet, Ramon Fernandez Duran suggests that this moment of crisis is a consequence of the collapse of global capitalism, which began in 2000 and which will run until 2030, coinciding with the decline of fossil fuel, the energetic concentration of which is irreplaceable by any of the currently known alternative energy sources. He argues that the beginning of the end of this energy is generating a total historical rupture<sup>9</sup>. His documented analysis points to an "atrocious" vision of the continuous present, and his hypothetical future

8. TOURAINE, Alain. "Después de la crisis. Por un futuro sin marginación". Ed Paidós, Barcelona, Buenos Aires, México, 2011. pp 158 "After the crisis. For a future without marginalization"

9. FERNÁNDEZ DURAN, Ramón. "La Quiebra del Capitalismo Global: 2000-2030, Ecologistas en acción, Virus Editorial, Baladre, CGT, Madrid, 2010 "Breakdown of global capitalism: 2000-2030"

scenarios “extremely fluid and changing”, presenting an opportunity for transformation.

New stories must be constructed to interpolate in a symbolic way an awareness of global interdependence, the personal responsibility for contemporary developments. New stories, expressing possible solutions, to replace competitive individualism with cooperative individualism.

### **Intermediate zones: unstable nuclei - floating Peripheries**

This need for new stories also presents a new paradigm for cultural and artistic practices. So far some of them have played a symbolic role close to the centres of power, while others are located in a supposedly peripheral area, to investigate alternative options or take a critical position of the system. When the system collapses, critical action must regroup as direct action and therefore propose structuring discourses (narratives) within the new social reality, participants in the processes of transformation. Spheres of action, up until now peripheral, and from which these practices have so far operated, will take on greater importance in the contemporary context.

An intermediate zone is a place of mediation among different things. There is a type of artistic practice whose function may be understood as a vehicle for forming relationships between different social entities (in relation to education, science, town planning, within a particular community ...). These practices act in intermediate areas. In these zones the centres become unstable, are brought into question, upon which the peripheral increases in value, strengthened because it gathers a constructive narrative of change. The need to find a way out of the extreme situation, justifies the *raison d'être* for the peripheral, and its utility (understood as the yearning for something new).

The centre-periphery relationship is a prolific concept in various fields such as geography, urbanism, economics, sociology or politics. Within the cultural field, it has also generated a large amount of visual and symbolic narratives. Specifically the aesthetics of the urban periphery has been, and will always be, a magnet for artists, architects, filmmakers and writers. The periphery is a floating thing, multiple cohabiting locations in relationship with other more established,

more institutionalised places which we call centres, heavier, denser, with more commitment, less autonomous, with less fluctuating structures. Being a centre carries an historic, moral, structural and systemic responsibility which reduces its dynamism. The centre must continuously position itself in competition with other nuclei of economic, urban and social power, decision-making, control, and thinking.

Centres of economic decisions are concentrated in a few individuals with vast fortunes of capital, speculating on legalised financial systems under the standard of greater personal enrichment. This financial structure has marginalised the actions of governments, has hurt wage-earners and is moving the unemployed and those in unstable working conditions even further to the edges. Urban and social peripheries no longer match, but still the tensions polarised by economic imbalances become increasingly accentuated. Social differences between higher and lower incomes grow, increasing poverty levels.

According to Alain Touraine, social categories have fragmented, causing the appearance of numerous smaller groups where “the poor are distinguished from the poorer, so as to differentiate one group from the other”<sup>10</sup>, immigrant workers arouse the rejection of a large part of the population, creating other subgroups, a fragmentation which has led to a blurring of what until now were called social classes, which means for Touraine, the end of the social or a “post-social” condition.

The periphery is a space in which one can continually reinvent and remake, a place of creativity and exploration. “The monster is always on the periphery. In the centre we have our customs, habits, our morals, and so on. And on the outskirts we collect all that is transgressive”<sup>11</sup>. Traditionally the periphery was a place of displacement, of indifference, of misery, exclusion, invisibility, a space outside the boundaries of the visible and controlled. Right now it is the space where hybridisation is staged, where everyone who wants to be part of a process of transformation should be, because the centres (of power) have be-

10. op.cit. Pp. 62

11. ARGULLOL, Rafael. “Centro y periferia. Criaturas fronterizas.” At <http://www.elboomeran.com/blog-post/2/4606/rafael-argullol/centro-y-periferia-criaturas-fronterizas>. Posted on 28/8/2008 (Centre and periphery. Border Creatures” - Posted on 28/08/2008)

come unstable nuclei, decaying spaces, structures governed adrift, and the peripheries are those places where something new may be built. Being on the periphery or part of it, in a cultural sense, has become a way of proposing alternative forms, a space of flux<sup>12</sup> from which to reclaim a new outlook on the world, new possible societies.

From these intermediate zones where nuclei become unstable and delocalised peripheries proliferate, artistic practices can position themselves as an active part in processes of transformation. We must take this opportunity and contribute to the necessary revolution which requires the involvement of many other parties. Firstly they must be redefined, in the same way that many social collectives or many activities attempt to influence government policies. There is no turning back, as the above-quoted authors have noted, there will be no return to the previous situation. We must write a new story under progressively precarious conditions. We must analyse, discuss and take positions for later broadcast, not only among politicians, but also various social groups, which must also be redefined.<sup>13</sup>

12. The concept, developed by Manuel Castells in the mid-90s, in which the space of flux overlaps or merges with physical space, has been confirmed. He argued that to be competitive in the new economy, in productivity and between regions and cities, it would be necessary to combine three key elements: IT capacity, quality of life and connectivity to international networks. Of these three elements, quality of life has suffered more evident relegation, due to the economic and social dualisation established in the cities. In: Castells, M. (1993), “European Cities, The Informational Society, and the Global Economy”. *Tijdschrift voor Sociale economische in Geografie*, 84: 247-257.

13. This text is a revised version of the text published in MESTRES Angel (director). “Musica para cameleones”, Transit Projectes, Barcelona, Madrid, 2012. Digital version available at: <http://musicaparamaleones.transit.es>

## Publics and Post-Publics: The Production of the Social

How is a notion such as 'the public', be it as a people, a space or a notion, produced? And how is it actualized? Are these three products interchangeable and synonymous with each other and the term public and, if so, how can they be entangled from the production process itself – linguistically, conceptually and socially – and are they the only emergent forms of this production? Or, in other words, does this production include and exclude, materialize or obscure? Obviously, such questions are closely connected, and can even appear tautological, in ways that conflate the apparently determinant and the possibly contingent elements, or products of the public sphere.

Part of my position has already been given by the title, "Publics and Post-Publics": the production of the social, indicating that the public is something that cannot only be pluralized and perhaps deconstructed, but also that it is something that produces, a construction, and not a given. It is not a fixed entity we can enter or exit at will, but rather something that has constitutive effects on the social, on how we socialize, and are indeed socialized. Secondly, I must add that the notion of publics and post-publics indicates how the public – again, be it a people, space or notion – is a mainly historical notion, a 19th-century concept based on specific ideas of subjectivity and citizenship that cannot be so easily translated into the modular and hybrid societies of late global capital, into the post-modern as opposed to emerging modern era. Indeed, it can be argued that the public sphere may not even be an adequate term to describe contemporary forms of representational politics (in art and culture) and political democracy (in democracy and its others). The question then becomes, what can be put in the place of the public?

*In the place of the public sphere?* was also the title of a symposium, later published in book form, that I organized in 2002. Here, we took our point of departure in the connection between the public as a political construct and public artworks as representations and interventions within this spatial formation, and in how changes within both the conception of the public and the production of contemporary art have radically altered the possibilities for art works in terms of articulation, intervention and participation. We asked: How does one perceive and/or construct a specific public sphere and positional and/or participatory model for spectatorship as opposed to (modernist) generalized ones? Does this entail a reconfiguration of the (bourgeois) notion of the public sphere into a different arena

and/or into a mass of different, overlapping spheres? Or, put in other terms, what can be put in the place of the public sphere?

This last question, as Miwon Kwon accurately pointed out in her contribution, must be read in two ways: both as what objects and acts could be placed in so-called public spaces, and also what kind of spatial formation could replace the public sphere as designated and imagined in the historical, bourgeois model?<sup>1</sup> Here I shall attempt to address both questions in turn, and not least how they are connected in a continuous process of articulation as constitution, since the idea of the public and its doubles, *the private*, obviously, but also *the counterpublic*, is simultaneously something imaginary and localizable – its condition is *always being and becoming* in one movement, a double meaning and a double bind. Thus, any attempts at answer the, admittedly, sweeping question of an *instead*, of *replacement*, has to go precisely through *placement*, through the condition of the connection between imagination and implementation, if not downright as implementation.

It is perhaps, then, no coincidence that the main theorist of the bourgeois notion of the public sphere, Jürgen Habermas, used the metaphor of a 'blueprint' to describe this historical model.<sup>2</sup> In discussing the public sphere's social structures, Habermas outlines what he calls the basic blueprint, by which he means a sketch of the new public sphere that was set up in between the private realm and state power in early bourgeois societies. But the phrase is very telling; a blueprint is not (only) a sketch, but rather a matrix from which forms are produced, such as in the printing of a book. It is molding, a setting into practice. The blueprint is, thus, that which is set in motion, not to describe society, or a category thereof, such as the public sphere, but in order to produce specific social relations, ways of doing and thinking socially, culturally and politically. Moreover, a blueprint does not emerge organically from social structures, but is imposed upon them in order to configure or, possibly, reconfigure them.

However, of what exactly does this blueprint consist? According to Habermas, the public sphere is principally a sphere in-between individuals and the

1. See Miwon Kwon's essay 'Public Art and Publicity' in Simon Sheikh (Ed.), *In the Place of the Public Sphere?*: Berlin: b\_books, 2005.

2. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1989. [the German original appeared in 1962]

state, a kind of buffer zone, and is made up of three basic features: political deliberation, culture and the market place. These features, or spaces, if you will, are not clearly demarcated, but nonetheless placed inside a given society, in the sense that they are strategically placed in between the private realm of economic exchange and family relations, on the one side, and sovereign state power and police actions, on the other. It is thus a space that mediates between these two more clearly demarcated entities, and is as such the space for public debate in a political sense. In this way, the bourgeois public sphere is modeled on the ancient Greek *polis*, where only those who were exempt from the struggle of daily life and labor could be understood as free and thus capable of political speech for the common good, not just self interest. Public speech is always, then, outside individual concern, outside economy and family, in the sense that it is above it. Only the father of the household can participate in public matters. In the modern version, however, this meant an exclusion of specific concerns rather than subjects from public debate, as well as a focus on rational argument. Excluded from politics, was, in effect, economy in the form of labor relations and, by extension, class struggle, as well as family relations that were confined to the private realm, basically gender relations, domestic work, sexuality and childrearing.

Included in the public sphere, was, as mentioned, culture, and not only artistic expressions and forms, but also art institutions played a crucial role in the establishment of the bourgeois public sphere and its separateness from daily life. Early art institutions were indeed self organized spaces, such as the German *kunstverein* – that is, spaces run and funded by enlightened citizens of the city, as both a representation of their values, and an authorization, as Frazer Ward has aptly coined it.<sup>3</sup> The emergent bourgeoisie reflected its values and ideals in such spaces, making them into representational spaces in more senses than one, artistic as well as culturally class based. Secondly, the art institution was – crucially – a place for aesthetic debate and judgment, on what was beautiful and true, valuable and significant in art, and, by extension, in the world. It was not only a cultural space, but also cultivating, and had as such an educational role.

The aesthetic debate, however, also played a significant political role, since aesthetic judgment and de-

3. Frazer Ward, 'The Haunted Museum: Institutional Critique and Publicity', *October* 73, Summer 1995.

bate worked as a rhetorical rehearsal of more proper political speech in the public realm and its role in the emerging bourgeois political hegemony, where state institutions became, principally, objects for public scrutiny and debate. This could take place exactly through the employment of rational argument as the privileged mode of speech: knowledge about art, and soon the quaint discipline that is art criticism, became a rational way of speaking about the fundamentally irrational objects (and statements) from artistic production itself. And this is why there still today is this division of labor between subject and object, between analyst and analysand, and, importantly, a crisis in the system of representation that is the bourgeois art institution when the artist/producer refuses his or her historical role, and actually take on the role of analysis and argument in any politically coherent – seemingly rational – way of speaking, although that is a whole other story...

For now, the important issue is one of spatial formation, namely, the in-betweenness of the public sphere and its mediation between the political, matters of state, and the non-political, labor and gender. What I have called its status of a buffer zone. Additionally, there is the issue of the placement of this spatialization of the concept, as inside, never outside society, either suggesting an emergence from within the social, or, more accurately, that the social is framed by certain boundaries, both real and symbolic. First, the notion of the buffer zone: in geopolitical terms, a buffer zone indicates a zonal area designed to separate two other, opposing areas, such as nations or tribes. The buffer zone may even itself be a nation, but its purpose is to alleviate tension, or war, between irreconcilable forces or interests – the same way Habermas views state power as opposed to private being. It is for this reason that the public sphere – as the buffer zone – by definition must strive towards consensus and equilibrium, as well as towards preventing the two areas from blurring or merging.

Indeed, within this way of thinking, the apparent ‘crisis’ of the public sphere, as it is seen by Habermas and his followers, has exactly to do with either side of the equation dominating too much, as in the case of too much privacy become public (from feminism to tabloid celebrity culture!), and with the diminishment of the buffer zone itself (as in the loss of the bourgeois public sphere, from communism to commercialization and surveillance!). Only certain spaces and certain experiences can be formulated as political, regardless of

how they are experienced. Rather, it is a question of *when* and *where*: not at home and after work. Commonplaces are, then, not public spaces.

In any case, the notion of the buffer is always to separate, never to bring the different spheres closer, and as such the buffer is not only a location for politics, but rather for rendering certain things, emotions and economies, *political* and others decidedly *non-political*. It is thus not only enabling political speech, but also hindering it, blocking it from becoming public. And this was precisely the point of Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge’s critique of the Habermasian model, tellingly entitled *Public Sphere and Experience*.<sup>4</sup> Their claim was that the exclusion of the private and the spaces of production (i.e., work and school and so on) from the term public, was in fact an act of blockage of experiences, of de-politicization of certain areas from the sphere of politics that was public space. Instead, they tried to posit spaces of production and reproduction as political, as discursive spaces of experience, and thus as in public spaces, in the sense that they are organizing collective experience. By placing the emphasis on the notion of experience, Negt and Kluge do not only point to the inequality of access to the public sphere in Habermasian terms; it also allows them to analyze modes of behavior and possibilities for speech and action in different spaces. And they argue for a specific, but plural, public sphere that can be termed ‘proletarian’ in opposition to the normative ‘bourgeois’ public sphere, where common places become public spaces.

This proliferation of spaces of to be considered public, or to be publicized, so to speak, not only brings antagonisms into the light, that the bourgeois public sphere tried to shade and even hide, but also leads to a fragmentation of the very idea of public space as one kind of place, as one specific location (even when it exists in a limited number of forms). In opposition to the normative, and very exclusionary, stand a number of other public formations, or what has also been termed counterpublics. That is, spaces that share some of the same organizational features as classic public formations, such as clubs, groupings, publications, but for other or opposite aims: other spaces for other subjectivities.<sup>5</sup> Historically, these were of course

4. Oskar Negt & Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience – Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere* (1972), Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993. [the German original appeared in 1972]

5. For a masterful account of the concept of counterpublics and its relationality to the normative public, see Michael Warner, *Publics and*

the public formations of the counter culture and new social movements. We can therefore only use the notion of public in a plural sense, as multiple, co-existent publics – historical (residues), actual (present) and potential (emerging).

This obviously has some quite wide ranging effects, and affects the different ways in which the public is imagined actualized as an entity along the lines mentioned at the outset of this essay: people, space, notion. A people can thus no longer be understood as one, as uniform, but as fragmented in terms of identity, ethnicity, class, gender and so on. Furthermore, this fragmentation cannot be understood, not only as (cultural) diversity, but also as oppositionality, radical difference. The same goes for the spatial actualization, with publics and counterpublics; we can first of all not only talk about one space, or a number of related spaces separated completely from others, but rather about a number of possible and impossible spaces with different discourses and modes of address, and, ultimately, the dematerialization of public spaces altogether, in both a positive and negative sense: expansion and disappearance at the same time. And for the more abstract concept of the public as a notion, it means that we must talk about it as an empty signifier, constantly filled with signifying content, with a forming of the social, production of subjectivity and distribution of economy. And in each case we are dealing with a concept where the descriptive and the prescriptive elements cannot be separated chronologically or politically.

As I mentioned earlier, the so-called in-betweenness of the public sphere not only has to do with its placement, but precisely also with its spatialization, and thus institutionalization (both real and imaginary). Again, taking up the line of production and fragmentation from Negt and Kluge, we must understand public spaces not only in the public/private divide, but also in relation to spaces of production. That is, how public spaces emerge *through* production, as ideological constructions, and through economic development. However, today, we would not describe public spaces only in dialectics of class struggle, but rather as a multiplicity of struggles, among them struggles for recognition, partly in shape of access to the public space, as well as the struggle for the right to struggle itself, for dissent. Secondly, as not only critics of the Habermasian model has pointed out, but certainly also Habermasians

*Counterpublics*, New York: Zone Books, 2002.

have publicly bemoaned, we are now witnessing the conflation of public spaces with modes of consumption rather than participation, where consumption becomes the main form of social communication.

As I have argued elsewhere, the art institution, once an exemplary bourgeois public space, is nowadays finding itself in a difficult transformative phase, where its historical role – as the caterer of taste and reason – has become obsolete without another critical role being apparent, or without another constituency emerging, other than commodity exchange within the experience economy (sic) and the spectacle society.<sup>6</sup> However, it will not suffice to claim that commercialization has contaminated the ‘good old’ public space; instead we must examine the contradictions of the concept in its historical genesis as well as its later developments and possible demise. For instance, the strange separation between the market as a social place, the marketplace, and economy and labor as private matters, taking place in non-public places and outside the political. We must replace separation with fragmentation, and as such look at the relations between different spaces of discursive production, in its many forms from knowledge production to the production of consumer goods and back again, leading to another hierarchical relationship between spaces of production and public spaces, a hierarchy that is also geopolitical. We must, then, ask which institutions – which ways of instituting – produce these hierarchies, these uneven global developments? And we must ask: what are the current relationships between publicness, consumption and production, and how can these categories be disentangled, locally as well as globally?

The spatialization of the concept of the public had not only to do with its state of in-betweenness of other spheres, but also with its state of being *inside* the social as such, or what we could call its state of being a state. That is, not only a people, but always a *specific* people of *sameness*, of a unity that could surpass differences of gender, class and even interest, namely the modern nation state. The public sphere is always inside the nation, and the state form becomes the agora, supported by national economy and taxation, education, language and culture, and so on. The social becomes

6. See my essays, ‘Anstelle der Öffentlichkeit? Oder: Die Welt in Fragmenten’, in: Gerald Raunig & Ulf Wuggenig (Eds.), *Publicum – Theorien der Öffentlichkeit*, Turia + Kant, Vienna, 2005, pp. 80-88, and ‘The Trouble with Institutions, or, Art and its Publics’, in Nina Möntmann (Ed.), *Art and its Institutions*, Black Dog Publishing, London, 2006, pp. 142-49.

instituted through the nation, and the inside is always defined as essential, in direct contrast to others; other peoples and nations, regardless of the fact that other nations may be structured around a similar principle of nationality, national institutions and cultures. The bourgeois nation state was, after all, not only founded upon the democratic paradox of liberty and equality, but also on *brotherhood*, which, besides its masculinist overtones, also implies bloodlines and kinship. Ethnic kinship and its others are a basic feature of the establishment of the public as the people, and as a national space. The public sphere is part and parcel of the nation state, established along similar lines of exclusion, of interiority and radical exteriority, and can as such not so easily be disentangled from nationality, or, indeed, from nationalism.

However, if the public sphere does not emerge organically from the ground of the social, but rather is always a means of grounding the social within society, then the social cannot have any positive content, any essence to express or basis to return to. The public sphere is thus an increasingly empty category, obsolete even, which has not so much to do with the blurring between private and public, or with the conflation between public deliberation and commodity exchange, as some observers would have us believe, but rather that the center of the *public-as-nation* simply cannot hold, not even as an identitarian, economic or political concept. Obviously, we were dealing with a projection that intended to produce the social in specific way within the emerging bourgeois society, as national citizens, first and foremost, a projection that has been shattered by counterpublic articulations, and alternative ways of socializing, of produced social relations. Moreover, we are now witnessing the withering away of the nation state itself in the later stages of global capital. And this is what we must call the post-public situation, where there no longer is any unity or even fixable locality to the public sphere (in plural). Where we are, rather, on a groundless ground.

To talk about any international, or even global, public sphere is, then, quite a contradiction in terms. To exemplify from the public sphere of the artworld, we can now say that any national artist is also an international artist. So, when a country selects their participant(s) for their national pavilions in Venice for the biennale, which was historically an international competition, and still is actually, they do not only, or mainly, select the most nationally representative artists, as in a folkloristic approach, but rather the ones with the biggest

international renown or potential. The jury is international, of course, and artists of an international caliber give the single nation a higher chance of winning the grand prize as a nation. A nation's grandeur can be measured in its international stature, within culture as well as within economy and military power – with the combination of all three naturally comes moral world leadership as well! We do not see this merger of the national and the international only in Venice, though, but pretty much at any major art event such as an art fair, a biennale or a large scale thematic museum exhibition, where the artists represented are not only required to be from all over the world, and as such attesting to the globalism of (high) culture, but also their individual nation. Just notice how country codes are always indicated behind the artists' names on press releases and invites, as if they were the stickers on the back of a car or participants in a major sports competition (which Venice in a way is).<sup>7</sup> In the post-public artworld, perhaps, a national artist is always international.

Perhaps any trans-national, or post-national concept of the public sphere can only be understood in terms of being (a) post-public, not in the sense of being after or beyond publicness as such, that we are somehow *unpublic*, or even returning to clandestine *prepublics* states, but rather a double movement of dematerialization and expansion of what could be considered public, affecting both our most local concerns and private senses of being, as well as trans-national economic flows and spaces of production and the geo-political. Post-publics are also post-colonial spaces. Indeed, I would suggest that the post-public can be understood as parallel to terms such as post-colonial, post-communist and post-feminist, in the sense of not being a radical break or departure, but rather a critical re-examination of its leitmotifs and basic modalities, where the bourgeois notion of the public, and its adjacent counterpublics, appear to us in the form of a phantom, as Bruce Robbins has suggested.<sup>8</sup> That the

7. Staying within this metaphor, it is interesting how some TV stations have been indicating the club of the football players in the World Cup, when they enter or leave the pitch, probably as some indicator of their skills and quality. Perhaps it would then be more telling if art exhibitions started listing the gallery names in parenthesis after the artist's name rather than the country he or she is from? It would certainly seem more in line with the current state of global capital and its more complex flows.

8. Bruce Robbins (Ed.), *The Phantom Public Sphere*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

public does not have any solid ground or placement, but rather an *after-life*, a specter-like presence.

How can the post-public then materialize, and which ways of instituting can take place within something so seemingly groundless and ephemeral? How can power be challenged without an agora, without fixed boundaries, but with growing social control and surveillance? How can common ground be found when common places are groundless, we could also say? What must be established, then, are public formations that can exist without the state, even in opposition to it. The post-public condition is not to be dismissed in any nostalgic returns to bygone conceptions of the public and spaces of production, but needs to be addressed in critical terms, with new questions emerging, corresponding to new problematics we are facing. Just as in the absence of the public sphere as we know it, as in a return to a superstructure without basis, there lies the danger of having all the visibility of publicness, but none of the possibilities for action and none of the rights of citizenry. In the words of Paolo Virno the main problem is as follows:

If the publicness of the intellect does not yield to the realm of a public sphere, of a political space in which the many can tend to common affairs, then it produces terrifying effects. *A publicness without a public sphere.*<sup>9</sup>

The post-public condition is not to be celebrated then, but to be seen as an analytic mode through which we can understand our actuality in order to act in it, obviously, but also in order to reconfigure it, to imagine it anew, and produce new institutions and ways of instituting the social rather than reproducing the old and the existent ones.

9 Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, New York: Semiotext(e), 2004, p. 40.

# RACHEL ANDERSON

## Attempting horizontality

I joined Artangel as head of Interaction in 2007 having previously worked as manager of a youth project in East London and then Education and Outreach manager at the South London Gallery. When I arrived at Artangel, the Interaction programme had just received a grant from Arts Council England to develop a series of nine commissions over a three-year period. Artangel doesn't work within the framework of a gallery and the intention was to develop new ways of engaging people who might not usually have access to the arts, in spaces where art would not usually be encountered.

### The thinking behind the Interaction programme

*Out beyond ideas of wrong doing and right doing, there is a field... I'll meet you there. (Rumi)*

From my experience of working within both the voluntary sector and gallery education I've become familiar with the usual model of education and outreach programming which delivers a policy of attempting to bring 'non arts audiences' into the gallery space to respond to the existing curatorial programme.

This approach comes with many complex issues, as well as a set of assumptions about how a 'non arts audience' might be. If the commissioners, curators and educators have a certain set of experiences, if we are predominately white, male (or female within arts education) heterosexual, middle/upper class, and formally educated, then this is often reflected in the programming or interpretive position, and a hierarchy is sustained which enforces a particular perspective and 'value position.'

In particular there are two types of 'value position' which I think it's important to recognise. Firstly, the majority of the art world is built around the value of the art 'product', a tangible outcome which can be bought and sold, visited, toured, re-contextualised, and owned.

Secondly, a socially based model invests in the perception that an investment in time and skill transfer might address, or even solve, a particular social problem. An investment in an art project (whether that be a public sculpture or a workshop) might achieve similar results as long term investment in social workers, drug councillors, youth workers and schools etc. The perceived value of Art is in its potential to transform conflict, rehabilitate and regenerate.

In terms of socially engaged commissioning, the predominant model is a vertical structure where a

government agenda or a funding body is at the top, below this is an arts organisation or gallery, below this is a curator, a social service provider, then, eventually, an artist and, finally, the participant or 'non-arts audience'. These roles can move and change positions but they almost always remain vertical.

Producers/artists can find themselves in the position of managing a relationship between all of these parties; seeking to address a 'problem' often defined by a higher institution or authority (not by the participant). In these conditions, it's easy for the creative process and collaborative relationships to become compromised, to feel forced, leading to outcomes which are recognised by neither artist nor community.

An alternative to this would be to trust and invest in processes that give time and space to the growth and exploration of ideas. This often leads to more relevant co-ownership, potentially reaching beyond the original idea or intention.

### Defining Artangel Interaction

In defining the Interaction programme we were interested in attempting to work horizontally, to try not to impose our will, assumptions or agenda on another party and invite an open exchange that supports a fluid, creative dialogue.

To truly embrace art's transformative power everyone needs to shift. A horizontal socially engaged practice must not only reach those perceived as most 'in need' but also those who assume the power of deciding what other people need, including the arts institution.

*If you've come here to help me you're wasting your time. But if you've come here because you believe your liberation somehow bound up in mine, stay and let us walk together.*  
(Lilla Watson, Aboriginal educator)

Interaction projects place value and emphasis on process. We are interested in how artists work, but more importantly in how artists can open up and expand the way they work to involve other people, how working with other people can enrich a project and transform ideas into something which couldn't have been imagined at that first conversation.

Everyone has a unique involvement; each person contributes differently and receives different things from participating. Our projects create their own boundaries, location, time length and form; we don't work inside the institution unless the project leads us

to that institution. The value of Interaction projects is in the way they are revealed and the stories they tell us when they arrive.

### Did you kiss the foot that kicker you? Ruth Ewan, 2007

*Give me the making of the songs of the nation, and I care not who makes its laws. (Andrew Fletcher, 1703)*

Ruth Ewan developed a project with over one hundred buskers and musicians gathered through a public call out in 2007. The project was developed around a song written in 1964 by folk musician and political activist Ewan MacColl.

The lyrics to MacColl's Ballad of Accounting follow a simple structure; the song offers criticism as self-reflection, repeatedly posing provocative and direct questions.

*Did you stand aside and let them choose while you took second best? Did you let them skim the cream off and then give to you the rest?*

Government records released in 2006 through The National Archive show that, from 1932, security service MI5 held a file on MacColl. One report claims that he was 'a communist with very extreme views' who needed 'special attention'. The file also states, as a cause for concern, that MacColl had 'exceptional ability as a singer and musical organiser'.

*Did you kiss the foot that kicked you?* involved the co-ordination of buskers along the commuter routes into the City, performing both under and above ground. The buskers incorporated *Ballad of Accounting* into their usual repertoire.

A week-long series of twice-daily performances slipped quietly into the rush-hour routine, a subconscious intervention; buskers performed individual acts in unison, connected by a shared set of questions.

Legislation has almost eradicated busking in London. By-laws and policing today keep most musicians from the streets. Changes to licensing of live music have applied pressure on the natural spontaneity of all musical performances. The project required lengthy negotiation with borough councils and police, and even though official channels were prepared to grant us permission to go ahead in principle, there was no system in place to do so. Technically, just standing still and singing in parts of London is against the law.



Did You Kiss the foot that kicked you. London Bridge. Photo: Thierry Ball



Did You Kiss the foot that kicked you. Ecstatic Mourning. Photo: Thierry Ball



Did You Kiss the foot that kicked you. Fang at Kings Cross. Photo: Thierry Ball



Did You Kiss the foot that kicked you. Fang at Kings Cross. Photo: Thierry Ball

### **The Museum of Non Participation.**

#### **Karen Mirza and Brad Butler, 2007-2009**

Karen Mirza and Brad Butler conceived *The Museum of Non Participation* in 2007 when – during the Pakistani Lawyers movement in Islamabad – they viewed the protests and subsequent state violence from a window in the Pakistani National Art Gallery.

Through *The Museum of Non Participation* they pursued ideas connected to their position that day

– through conversation, images, activities and narratives following strands of dialogue to different people, places and contexts. Working over a two year period with street vendors, Urdu translators, architects, estate agents, housing activists, lawyers, hairdressers, filmmakers, newspaper printers, artists and writers, they have played out different manifestations of *The Museum of Non Participation*.

*The Museum of Non Participation* raises questions about resistance and the choice and consequence of action versus inaction. The structures of conflict, class and monetary divisions within a globalised world provoke engagement with the problems of participating or not participating in such a system, whether in Karachi, London or elsewhere; *The Museum of Non Participation* examines how our lives in one space have implications on the other.

**Urdu/English language exchange.** The project first appeared as an English/Urdu language class in September 2008. The free class invited English and Urdu speakers to exchange conversational language under the guidance and mediation of Hasan Sheikh (recruited through advertising in a local shop). It became a space for cultural and linguistic exchange.

**Karachi.** In collaboration with artist collective VASL, Mirza and Butler returned to Karachi in December 2008, where they occupied a space at the Pakistani Arts Council. This open space became a location to work through ideas with (non) participants and a base from which they conducted interventions outside in the streets of the city. They distributed newspapers as packaging for food sold by the tandoor wallas, presented performance interventions at Sunday Bazaar, and worked with sign writers and Urdu poets to produce text banners and wall paintings that demarcated the Museum as a pop-up institution, announcing a new way of moving through and looking at the city; in a city with almost no museums, the city itself became the museum.

**Daily Jang collaboration.** On 20 September 2009, a newspaper publication featuring some of the different voices and interpretations of the title was distributed across the UK as a supplement of *The Daily Jang*, the international newspaper from Pakistan's oldest and largest media group.

This newspaper invited text and image contributions from all project participants and was designed by the Jang's London based designer Yousuf Haider and printed on their London printing press. Translated into Urdu and English, the MONP newspaper was distributed as a Sunday Supplement during Eid and reached an audience of 60,000 readers.

**London – a four-week programme of talks and events.** The public face of *The Museum of Non Participation*



MONP\_ Boundary wall intervention, Karachi. Photo: Karen Mirza



MONP\_ Headquarters. Photo: Brad Butler



MONP\_ Language flyer. London



MONP\_Language class intervention



MONP\_newspaper intervention karachi. Photo: Karen Mirza



MONP\_Sunday Bazaar performance Karachi. Photo: Karen Mirza

consisted of a month-long programme of events at Yaseen barber's shop on Bethnal Green Road. It brought together the multiple aspects of the project in a programme of film screenings, talks, discussions, Urdu poetry, and performance delivered by a variety of project collaborators and invited guests. The space was transformed into an archive of the project showing elements from the process, slide shows, reading material, photography and print media.

### **Invisible Food** **Ceri Buck**

*Human conversation is the most ancient and easiest way to cultivate the conditions for change ... if we can sit together and talk about what's important to us, we begin to come alive. We share what we see, what we feel, and we listen to what others see and feel. (Meg Wheatley)*

Writer Ceri Buck began *Invisible food* by inviting her neighbours to take a walk with her. The project developed through playful walking, observation, conversation and eating in search of wild food in the Loughborough area of Brixton.

These walks slowly grew to become larger open events for residents to join. After walking, participants made or cooked something with the herbs, flowers or berries that they found.

"Invisible food is no expert. We are an experiment arising from the fractured and isolated urban condition of having very little to do with plants. Invisible food is an excuse to learn. Invisible food is a project to discover the wild food growing quietly in the Loughborough area, food that can nourish local residents into health and resilience. Invisible food responds to the global necessity to live more locally, to rely less on transport - now that the blip of cheap oil is over - and to create stronger networking communities".

Since the commission period, *Invisible Food* has been registered as its own company, supported by a committee and has raised additional funding to develop further outreach projects with local women's groups, the adventure playground, the local market and schools. The walks continue and are attended by up to forty people each month. Moreover, through the project, an allotment has been created on the estate, where communal vegetable growing takes place.

### **Smother.**

### **Sarah Cole and Coram Young Parents project, 2008-2010**

*Smother* was developed over 18 months and evolved intensively through weekly activities with young parents and their children over the course of 9 months, culminating in a durational performance-based installation inside a derelict house in Kings Cross. .

Sarah Cole conducted a series of creative workshops every Friday afternoon within the existing structure of the Coram Young Parents' Drop-in, these workshops were a vehicle to develop a shared language amongst the group. Metaphors developed, articulating a range of emotions and experiences that each person related to personally, through the memory of conversation and relationships within the project.

Positive social provision for young parents is rare and under-resourced. For many of the participants the weekly visit to Coram is their main access to support with urgent issues around housing and welfare. This project located itself within an institutional framework and had to consider a complex accommodation of needs including: the group (which was initially sporadic in attendance); individuals attending the group (teenagers and their babies ranging from new born to 10 yr olds); Coram employees; Coram as an institution with its funding and political agendas; Sarah's position as artist; the project's funding requirements; and Ar-tangel's agenda.

As the workshops developed, the importance of the domestic space and its significance in the lives of the young parents became increasingly clear. The symbolic connotations of the different interior spaces within a home, coupled with the transient and precarious nature of their situations - the practical difficulties of simply finding and maintaining a place to live - were all central issues for the young parents as they navigate their own adulthood alongside the complexities of parenthood.

In January 2010 the project moved into 101 Kings Cross Road - an unusually-shaped three-sided house built around 1874 with just one room on each floor, linked by a winding staircase. The weekly workshops moved from Coram to the house on Kings Cross Road, and the work quickly developed in direct relation to the space.

The work materialised as a series of performances, performed by professional actors inside the house. The actors were cast using a workshop process which the young parents and children were part of. The



Ceri Buck. Invisible Food. Berries. Photo: Ceri Buck



Ceri Buck. Invisible Food. Nasturtium. Photo: Ceri Buck



Ceri Buck. Invisible Food. Chickweed. Photo: Ceri Buck



Smother balloon boy.  
Photo: Tas Kyprianou



Smother pushchair.  
Photo: Tas Kyprianou



Smother climbing.  
Photo: Tas Kyprianou



Smother folded mattress.  
Photo: Tas Kyprianou



Smother Holly. Photo: Tas Kyprianou



Smother. Process. Photo: Sarah Cole



Smother skater. Photo: Tas Kyprianou



Smother tea cups. Photo: Tas Kyprianou



Smother. Process 2. Photo: Sarah Cole



Smother. Drawing of 101 Kings Cross Road. Sara Nesteruk

young parents worked alongside Sarah, in group and one-to-one scenarios, to develop the (unscripted) material with the actors.

The house consisted of five floors and was home to three inhabitants. The three inhabitants were female actors playing parts that represented the young parents. The characters articulated the range of emotions and experiences of young parenthood. In the basement, skating on a synthetic ice-rink, is a young girl who represents a fifteen-year-old who has just discovered she is pregnant. She shifts between fear, anger and joy as she contemplates her imagined future. In the middle floors, an older woman in her early twenties, who has the space to reflect on her experiences, navigates a complex relationship with an absent father and struggles to calm a child in the height of a tantrum. At the top of the house, a new mother struggles with a shifting, sleepless routine and tries to keep up appearances for social services.

### Conclusion

Over the past two years we have worked with the University of Central Lancashire in a comparative research study to observe and articulate the interaction model, the results of which will be published in 2011.

The artists involved in the Interaction project have embraced this invitation in different ways to inspiring degrees. Handling their own struggle between the need to control a product and trusting that opening their practice will take them somewhere more amazing. Managing the expectations of people we've met and worked with has taken careful negotiation: how do you answer the need to know what we're making; and why we are entering this process together.

Finding common ground to begin an enquiry of equal relevance and investment has been rewarding. Coram parents service, for example, has seen that an open artistic process can naturally create a space to address issues which are on their agenda, and have adopted a new arts policy affecting their entire service approach which will last long beyond our commissioning investment. Invisible Food has also grown far beyond the commission and become a project that continues, sustained by Ceri Buck and the people who work with her.

Karen Mirza and Brad Butler are still developing *The Museum of Non Participation*, further expanding the collaboration and ideas in different sites and contexts.

Time is one of the most precious resources. Maintaining an emphasis on horizontal practice, being

constantly mindful of how fragile that balance is, the Interaction programme has been - and still is - an experiment; a bold but subtle shift in position, which challenges people more than I could have imagined. My challenge is still one of articulation, of developing a language through all involved that doesn't try to fix or define the impact that creativity can have on all of us. For me, it still presents itself as a feeling, an instinct and a connection.

Further information about all of the projects can be found at [artangel.org.uk](http://artangel.org.uk).

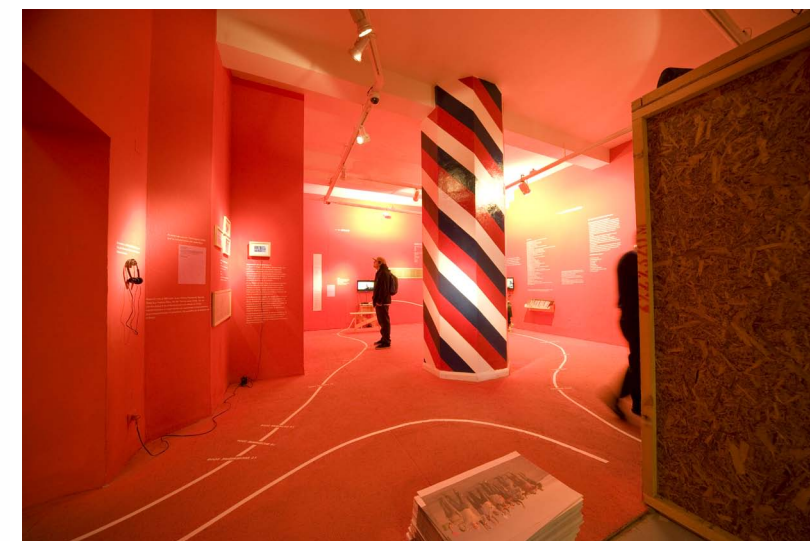
## Josep-Maria Martín. Made in Chile

**O. Josep-Maria Martín** works with the energy generated by people. What we mean by this is that the starting point of his work, the developed processes and results -if one can speak of results different from the dynamics that have brewed them- take as a reference point very specific human situations. His involvement as an artist in a specific social context in no way implies the renunciation of the symbolic capacity of art. On the contrary, he fully uses its aesthetic dimension, while revealing certain power dynamics that affect reality and, by extension, he shows processes of implicit discrimination that those create. His works are diametrically opposed to the beautification of reality through art.

*Made in Chile* certainly illustrates the way he works - concept, method, formalization...- in its many facets, following a double directionality: transform and reveal. First, by focusing on material conditions and life patterns. Something that implies a transformation of the mentality of the group that the project addresses. But also, secondly, projecting a given situation to the rest of the social body allows intervening in the public opinion and the correlation of social domination,<sup>1</sup> avoiding the dominant uncritical monopoly. Therefore, it is about creating an experience of direct contact with reality, so that this action can have a positive impact in the lives of the people -transmitter and receiver at the same time- to later communicate this experience. Throughout this process, the artist investigates and explores, involves as many collaborators as possible, seeking a multidisciplinary approach; he does not address the conflict or the contradictions in the social system.

**1. An extremely human landscape.** The confluence of desert and sea determines a vector of maximum intensity. It is a shifting border between water and earth. The Pacific can violently take up a few hundred meters of the coast, devastating human settlements. We are in a desolate and beautiful landscape, tough and friendly at the same time. Caleta Chipana is located here, very close to the sea. It is a fishing community of less than fifty houses. The joy and dignity of its residents hides facts such as the self-building of the houses with planks, the lack of running water (a barrel distributes drinking water every ten days) or electricity provided by a generator that runs five hours

<sup>1</sup> See HABERMAS, J.; *Historia y crítica de la opinión pública*, 2006, pp. 267-8.



per day. The nearest school is 40 km away, while the chapel was consecrated in 2008.

Located at 140 km south of Iquique, Caleta Chipana is like a multiple border, the dividing line between civilization and nature, developed world and poverty, existence and oblivion. It is a discordant note in a world supposedly in progress.

**2. Contradictions.** Josep-Maria Martín carried out *Made in Chile* within the framework of the bicentenary of Chile, as part of the exhibition DISLOCACIÓN; a

concept that, in the words of Ingrid Wildi, its curator, points out "the existence of a discontinuity" as it indicates both facts of "separating a subject from its nucleus of function" and "torsion of an argument or reasoning" in relation with its context. The general framework that the exhibition proposed was that of globalization, a worldwide phenomenon that frames situations of marginalization.

Josep-Maria Martín came across Caleta Chipana during his travels in Chile. His aim was to get an idea as far as possible from the clichés, by having contact

with the people and putting aside all preconceived notions. Away from the Chilean cities, their industry and mines, Caleta Chipana was a forgotten place that did not appear in the official image of a country that has been proud of its economic development in recent decades.

**3. A housing prototype: the houses.** *Made in Chile* came up through the contact with the residents of Caleta Chipana. The response of the community to the project was very positive. The residents greeted it with enthusiasm and willingness to participate. The development of the project began with a research, carried out through contact with the community of Caleta Chipana and through interviews with architects, journalists, activists, politicians, lawyers, artists, psychologists, doctors, a tarot reader, a cardboard collector, economists, sociologists and others.

The proposal consisted in the construction of new houses, through a process that would allow rethinking the models of coexistence in Caleta Chipana and based on the needs and desires of its residents. Self-building, a sign of a certain level of subsistence, gave way to self-conception, an indicator of autonomy and maturity. It was necessary, therefore, to develop some type of housing. At this stage, the proposal entered a phase that is essential to Josep-Maria Martín's projects: the negotiation between the various sectors and individuals involved in the project.

**4. Identity. Identities.** Defining a housing prototype based on the desires of a human community involves going into its collective and individual identity in more depth and making it visible. Each of the residents of Cala Chipana delimited his/her spaces, location, place as individual and in relationship with the other members of the community: kinship, friendship, affinities. A collective identity is not given, nor imposed. Individuals construct it, by adding up many identities. Thus, the housings *Made in Chile* become the intersection point of three vectors: the imaginary of some people, the material development of a community and of some very specific social, economical and cultural structures.

The housing prototype passed through various phases throughout the negotiation process, such as defining the space for the development of the project on human scale, a concept that Manfred Max-Neef based on the satisfaction of fundamental human needs, on *the generation of growing levels of self-reliance,*

*and on the construction of organic articulations of people with nature and technology.*<sup>2</sup>

**5. Formalization. Execution.** In parallel with the project definition, Josep-Maria Martín contacted *Un Techo para Chile*, a popular association that was founded in 1997 with the aim of building new housing for families living in camps, and in houses in bad condition. Two arts and cultural institutions, the Galería Gabriela Mistral and Centro Cultural Matucana 100, together with Un Techo para Chile became the greatest promoters of the project. Other professionals also joined the process together with the residents of Caleta Chipana, contributing to the development of the project. The result consisted of a geometric and organic housing module, located a little farther from the sea, outside the tsunami danger zone in which the community is based today.

**6. The End.** After a working process of over more than two years, the end is not a happy one. In fact, one could not yet speak of an end. The funding for the construction of the houses was cut unexpectedly. The housing prototype of *Made in Chile* for Caleta Chipana does not fit in the parameters of official structures: a housing model based on participation and collaboration, on dialogue that optimizes the financial resources and leads to the emergence of a housing with higher standards, exportable, and adaptable to other situations and concepts.

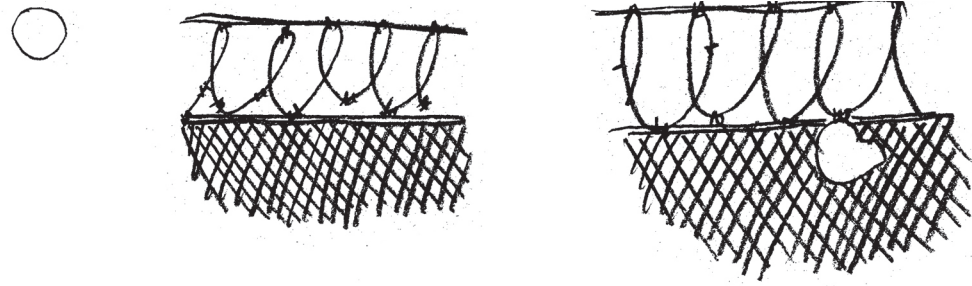
Obviously the end has not come yet, because the debate is still going on. A debate about the socio-economical models and participation; about human development and identities; about the reality of Chile that most often -and in this, not so different from our reality-, has not done justice to some social processes in its history.

2. MAX-NEEF, M.; *Human scale development: conception, application and further reflections*, 1991, p. 8.



## Balls, fences, locals & visitors

A. A BALL    B. A BARBED WIRE    C. AN INTERRUPTION OF A MATCH

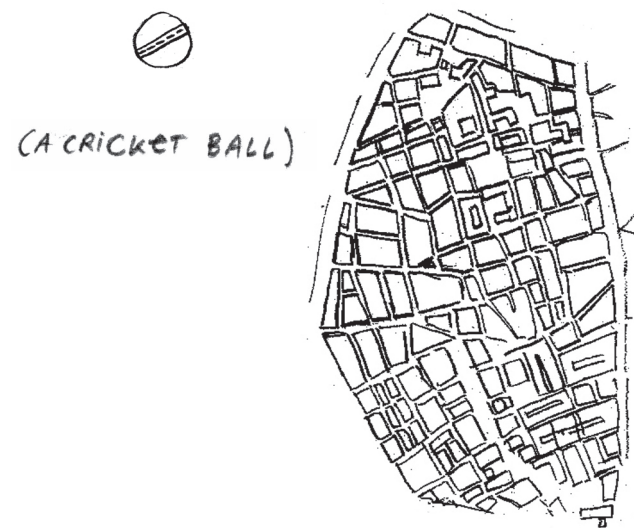


\*Drawings inspired on the project *Kms. of concrete* (Various locations, 2004) that was focused on fences and walls and the tensions they were articulating.

**Balls, fences, locals & visitors** is an attempt to translate the 1.500 words and visuals I employed for my presentation at QUAM'10 into drawings. Images may fall short in representing some of the experiences that emanated from three projects -*Grada Zer0*, *BCNxuta* and *Kms. of concrete* on view at [www.laiasole.net](http://www.laiasole.net). However I hope they will better highlight three aspects I'm interested in:

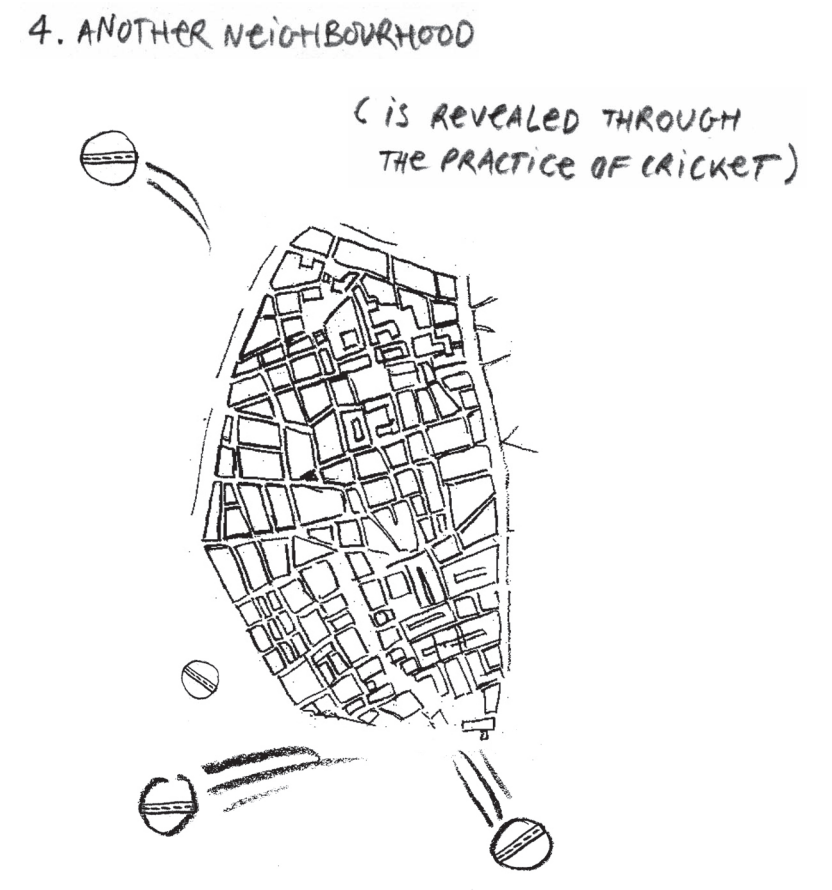
- The figure of a ball: an object that I've used, both metaphorically and physically, to talk about social space, interaction and serendipity. Even if directed by the player -here the researcher or the artist- balls are prone to take unexpected turns while moving across the space; modifying the direction of the research and of the art project, and generating space for people to meet.
- The figure of a fence: an object I've used metaphorically and physically to draw attention to the regulation of public space and of urban life, and to the arts' possibility to find, highlight or create cracks in the system.
- The figure of the local and the visitor: a metaphor taken from ID#4 that I'm using to pinpoint the exchange of knowledge that often occurs in this kind of projects. While working in contexts that are presumably 'alien' to the arts -such as a Hospital, a grocery or a soccer club- interaction with local agents have led me to a situation where both the artist and the project were exchanged with the locals: the artist becoming local and the locals visitors, and vice versa.

1. ANOTHER BALL    2. A NEIGHBOURHOOD



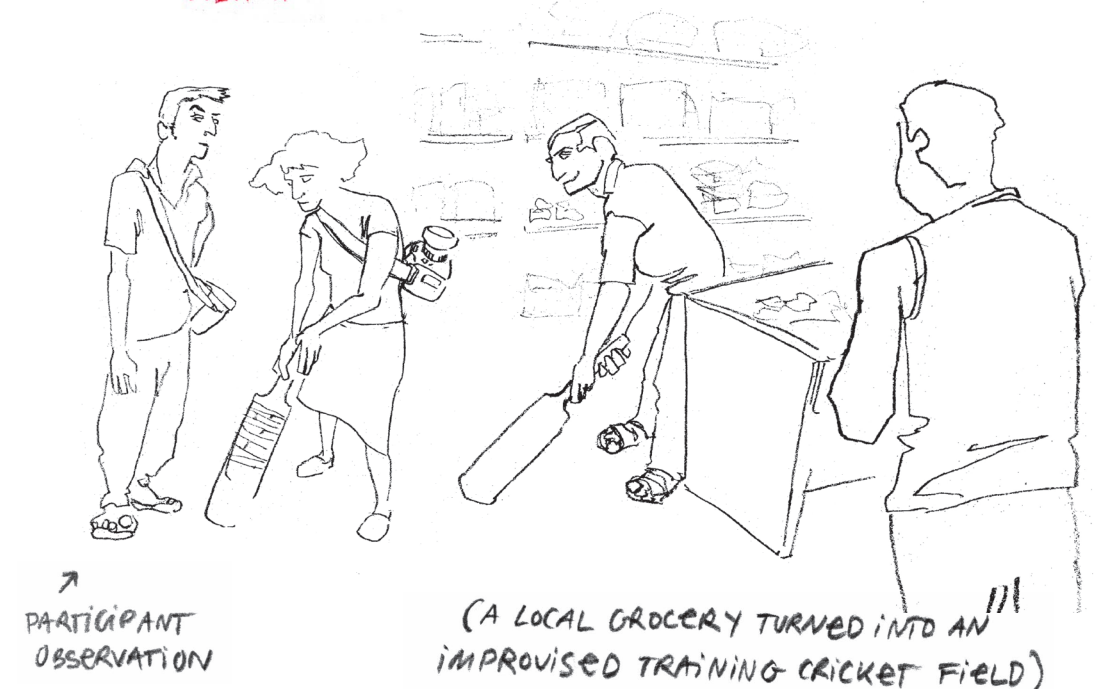
(A CRICKET BALL)

(RAVAL, CIUTAT VELLA, BARCELONA)



\*Ciutat Vella (The Old City, where Raval belongs to) is the third most dense district of Barcelona and one that has the youngest population and a large Pakistani community. It is not strange to meet some neighbours training or playing cricket on the street, since cricket is one of the most popular sports in the Indo-Pak continent.

5. A GROUP OF ~~LOCAL~~ ARTISTS VISITOR + A GROUP OF PAKISTANI CITIZENS LOCALS

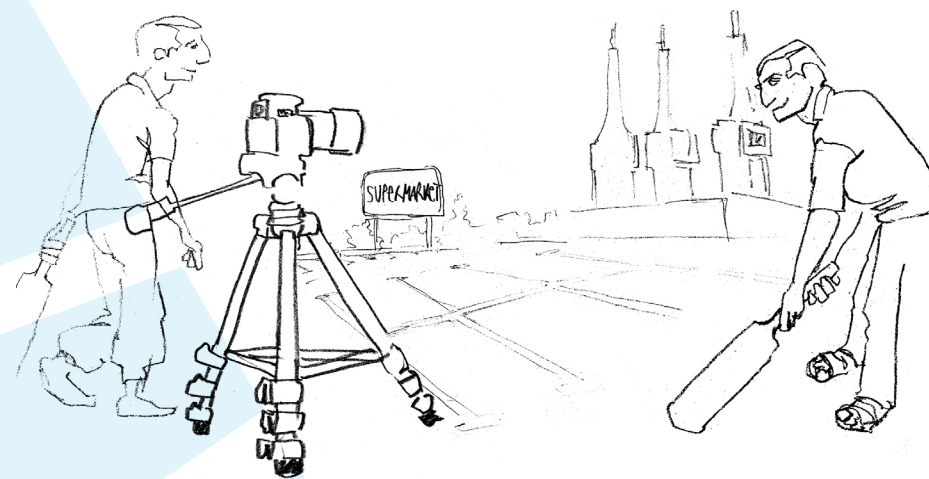


## 6. ANOTHER INTERRUPTION OF A MATCH



\*On top of the density in the Old City, there is the issue of the Civic Law: an ordinance that seeks to promote and ensure the coexistence of citizens in public spaces, by regulating (prohibiting) spontaneous or in mass sports activities.

## 7. DISPLAY OF TACTICS

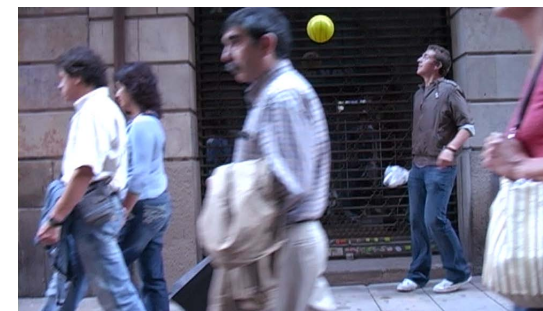


DOCUMENTATION ↗

(AN EMPTY PARKING LOT AT THE OUTSKIRTS TURNED INTO A PLAYING CRICKET FIELD)

## 8. THE RENEWAL OF THE GAME

INTERVENTION  
↓



Stills of a video produced together with Glòria Safont-Tria (Barcelona, 2008), which was the result of previous processes of exchange with locals. Instead of 'solving' the issue of game restrictions in the Old Town, we were concerned about the tactics we had been observing; we employed some of those tactics in a collective action that aimed to make visible the limits of public space and the capacity of the game to generate interaction, by kicking a ball in the city center of Barcelona.

# NICOLÁS DUMIT ESTÉVEZ

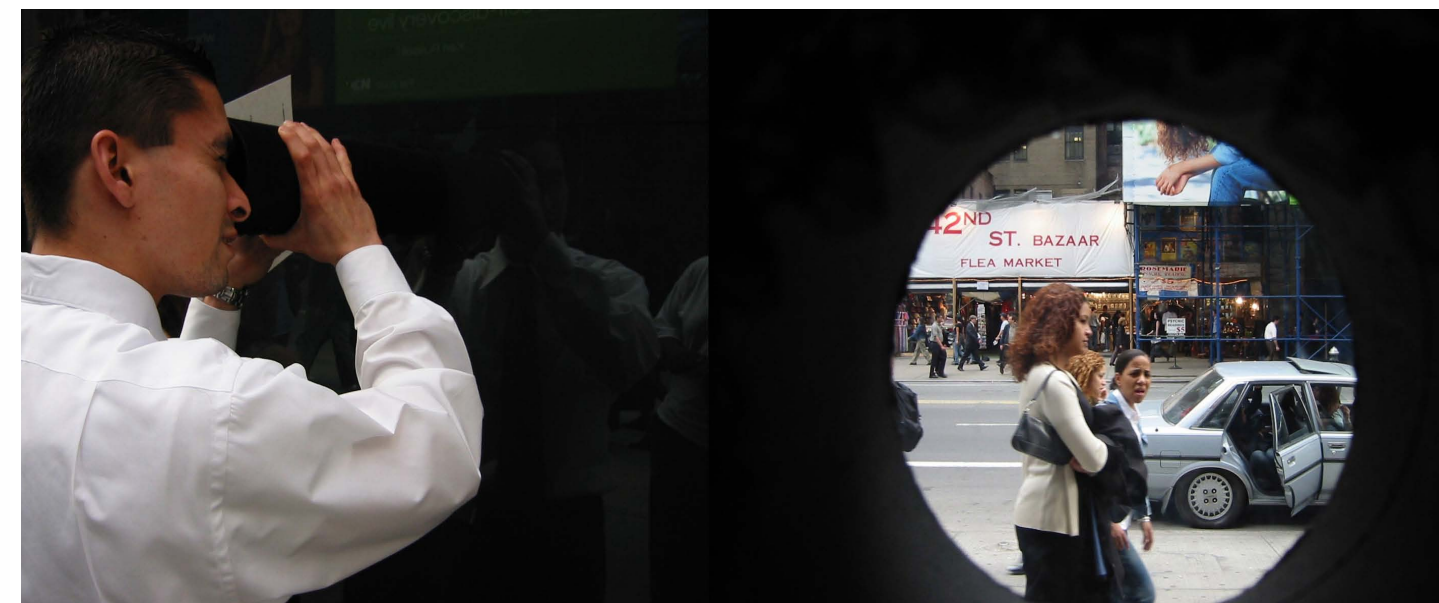
## If I Could Speak Again: Re- imagining my Presentation at QUAM

I am sitting at home, not so much pondering about the route to take with regards to my participation in this publication, but deciding how to get to the core of my talk at QUAM on July 9, 2010. By the core, I mean finding a space, *entre grietas*, between the cracks, free of preconceptions – institutional, political, artistic, or otherwise – where I can insert my voice in spite of any contradictions, biases, doubts and suspicion that such an endeavor could potentially engender. I will thus introduce the images that I brought to the event to shed light onto some of the questions and comments that my work elicited from audience members. These questions and responses are recorded towards the end of this paper, and most of them have been reconstructed as faithfully as possible, as well as I can remember. I must mention that when my turn to speak at QUAM arrived, what had developed as a full day of interwoven talks by different panelists seemed to be in some way disrupted by my presence. This situation caught me by surprise and, not wanting to tilt the conversation to my side, I opted for replying to the audience's questions with brief answers. I also decided to do this after realizing that, at that particular moment, the space for divergence was not as wide as I estimated it to be and that, as an artist, there were certain topics and certain preoccupations I was not supposed to air, to verbalize, let alone get my hands on. [Oops!]

It feels good to know that I have up to 15,000 characters to talk. However, I promise beforehand not to abuse this generosity.

### **What follows is a reconstructed version of my presentation at QUAM:**

NICOLÁS DUMIT ESTÉVEZ: Good evening my name is Nicolas Dumit Estevez, I am an interdisciplinary artist working mostly in performance art, art in spaces of public use and what I have come to call as experiences, or art in every day life experiences. During the last ten years my artistic interest has centered on the urban environment and in interacting and collaborating with different audiences and communities. For example, In 2001 I opened "Fellatious", a peepshow presented with Chashama at a storefront window in Times Square, a highly trafficked zone in New York. This specific area used to be the city's most prominent red light district until, in the 1990s, Mayor Giuliani decided to "sanitize" the neighborhood, giving greedy developers another slice of the Big Apple. The peepshow that I built had the particularity of pushing what would be a customarily marginalized indoor space out



Nicolás Dumit Estévez. *Fellatious*, 2002

onto the street. Hence I used a storefront window to offer for sale one of my bodily organs, my mouth. Voyeurs included men in suits or in uniform and some amused – or curious – passersby. They would either engage with or walk away from the sensual audio I used to lure the crowds to "Please deposit twenty five cents for ten seconds of viewing." At the end of the day I pocketed fifty tax-free dollars.

Real estate in Lower Manhattan translates square feet into gold. Talking about Lower Manhattan, 2002 marked the first anniversary of the World Trade Center attack. During this year a former office building in the area became the site for the launching of a series of artists' proposals presented with Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. "The Passerby Museum", a collaboration between María Alós and myself, was one of the projects involved. For our intervention, Alós and I carved space out of the ground floor of a commercial location. Thus "The Passerby Museum" opened its doors to groups of hurried New Yorkers eating folded slices of pizza during their mid-day break, sipping coffee while conducting business on their cell phones, or competing for sidewalk space with tourists on a journey to Ground Zero to stare at the void left by the missing towers. In its role as a nomadic repository of the material culture of the neighborhood in which it operates, "The Passerby Museum" in Lower Manhattan collected and exhibited resumes, drivers' licenses, poems and other objects that passersby donated. That is, until the Museum folded to allow for further renovation of the building. The spot is now occupied by yet another bank.

The two previous engagements with space led me to seek to connect, by way of secular pilgrimages, cultural institutions located at various points of the New York Metropolitan area. "For Art's Sake," the undertaking that I am describing, took off in 2004 and was presented with Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and Franklin Furnace. The project consisted of seven pilgrimages modeled after El Camino de Santiago de Compostela, in Galicia. Instead, I traveled from Lower Manhattan to seven museums, enacting one penance per journey, and carrying a credential that was signed upon arrival by the museum director or an appointed official. For example, during one of my journeys, I walked for two days from the northernmost tip of Manhattan to the Queens Museum of Art in Flushing Meadows, Queens. While en route I stopped at several public libraries and not-for-profit art organizations where I sought to spread the word about the lives of seven consecrated performance artists. This pilgrimage taught me that what I had initially envisioned as a journey connecting a point of departure with a point of arrival would eventually take an organic detour, proving that, sooner or later, the City and its inhabitants would be the ones shaping my path and not the other way around. To this end, at one of public libraries in Queens where I stopped to talk about the seven artists, an older man in the audience said to me something like: "More. We want to hear more about these artists that you are presenting. How do they do this?" His query led The New New Yorkers Program at the Queens Museum of Art to invite me to teach a workshop on performance art and art in everyday



María Alós and Nicolás Dumit Estévez. *The Passerby Museum*, 2002 — present. Photograph: Sebastián Romo. © 2002 The Passerby Museum

life. And so, people came to this institution to talk as performance art, people complained as performance art, walked as performance art, sought to right injustice as performance art, and people talked about the struggles of undocumented immigrants as performance art. At lunchtime all participants convened to eat empanadas as performance art. I believed we were consuming art, and art tasted a little bit on the greasy side, but very good. I also believed that everyone in the workshop who was not previously an artist became one, and I imagined that there was no more need for museums or galleries to exist, or for me to claim creative hegemony.

Pushing a peepshow out into the streets, carving out room for an itinerant museum in a building being converted into a fancy co-op, and journeying from one art institution to another, connecting different points of New York City, led me to look for more space. In 2007, invited by IDENSITAT, I moved from my home to Calaf, Catalonia, with the intention of meeting everyone in this town. The premise for this experience was to go from being a visitor to becoming a local in a town of 3,500 inhabitants. Exchanges were to take any shape suggested by residents, or mutually agreed upon by those involved. One important finding for me as an artist was how in this experience life and art worked together to define the space. The town itself became “the stage” and the mundane in all of its ramifications held hands with art, morning till midnight, day after day.

I will close this presentation by showing some images of “Nicolas Slept Here.” For this future experience I will invite Bronxites to host me at their places for one night. We therefore can spend time organiz-



Nicolás Dumit Estévez. *For Art's Sake/Pilgrimage to the Bronx Museum of the Arts*. Photograph: Manuel Acevedo

ing their closets, doing homework with their children, shopping, “making art,” or just living, among other activities. One of the components of my sleepovers will include photographing my hosts’ favorite spots in their homes. I would like to point out that many fellow New Yorkers have never been to my neighborhood, or to my borough. Call it pride, neglect, or prejudice. The Bronx is a beautiful place. “Nicolas Slept Here” is part of a larger project I am developing with Longwood Arts Gallery and the Bronx Council on the Arts, and which will be presented or exhibited in partnership with collaborating organizations such as the Bronx River Alliance and Lehman College Art Gallery. The project that I am describing is based on my learning how to become a Bronxite (a native of the Bronx). I should stop here. Otherwise, further description of this endeavor will require a lengthy conversation on social justice, environmental racism, and exclusionary policies by governmental institutions. There is only so much that art can handle.

#### Questions, comments and responses to my presentation at QUAM:

**Audience Member : Why artists as saints?**

**Nicolás Dumit Estévez** (answer to this question during QUAM): I see them as the visionaries of our time.

**AM: I don't want to sound acid, but why rituals?**

**NDE** (answer to this question during QUAM): rituals were my first introduction to performance art.

**NDE** (delayed response to the question about rituals four months after QUAM): Because Museums have replaced churches; because America is a huge ritual

in progress, and because I am an American who has been overfed with huge portions of post-colonialism, capitalism, globalization, abstract expressionism, neo-liberalism, individualism and all of the religious stuff brought from the “Old World” to the “New”. I can't get rid of all of this baggage overnight.

**AM: (reconstructed question asked to Ramon Parramon during QUAM): What would happen if art gets so deeply intertwined with other disciplines and it melds with them to the point where it cannot be recognized? Would that matter?**

**NDE** (Nicolas moves from question to comment): I am working to see the walls that box in art collapse. I wonder what would happen when there is no need to make art or to call it thus.

**AM: (reconstructed question asked during QUAM): How do you see transformation?**

**NDE** (reconstructed response four months after QUAM): I have to experience what I do in order to understand transformation at a personal level. Once I have done so, then I can invite others, whether collaborators or participants, to consider the possibility of opening themselves up to the transformation that art can effect on their lives.

**AM: (reconstructed question asked during QUAM): What is this evangelizing role of art?**

**NDE** (delayed response to the question about this evangelizing role of art four months after QUAM): I hear the gospel of publicity on a daily basis. I am trying to become deaf to it. We artists carry the easel and the brush to far-away lands where biennials take place. Often times our role is to bring the message of art to the public or to bring those perceived as “unenlightened” publics into the “redeeming” realm of museums and galleries.

**NDE:** (this is neither a reconstructed question nor a response, but a last comment): I did not get to talk about the humor in my work until after the conference was over, when two audience members hinted at it – one of them was a woman dressed in a clown outfit. Although the smiles I heard here and there during my talk were in response to some of the outlandish props I have used as well as to my non-reverential approach to some of the topics presented, the quiet laughs coming from the audience made me aware that at QUAM we were talking serious stuff, that laughs were to be

left for the end, that laughing was to be carried outside when the art conversation was over. In my art practice humor has helped me approach difficult subjects with an ease that would otherwise have proved to be almost impossible. Art can indeed be democratic, civic, transformational, committed and still make us laugh. In the Dominican Republic, where I was born, there is a poignant statement that says that one “laughs not to cry.” This popular saying summarizes the power of humor to counteract the starkness of Latin America's socio-economic realities. I suggest the reader end this piece by cracking a smile. A big laugh would be good too, but not necessary.

Note:

More questions or comments about or beyond QUAM? Nicolas will be very happy to answer the first four e-mails he receives. No reconstructed answers. A response within four days is guaranteed. Send your messages to: [indioclaro@hotmail.com](mailto:indioclaro@hotmail.com)

Suggested topics for your e-mail questions: Cracks in the city (grietas), public art, biennials, artists as social workers, artists as bridging agents for arts institutions, civic involvement, performance art, interacting with the Other, transformation, socialism, the professionalization of art, or PYOT (propose your own topic).

November 14, 2010, Bronx, New York



## Community and diversity

Transcript of the speech: Mia Guiteres

I would like to contribute with some thoughts that rise from the place I stand in, which is a place of conflicts, conflicts between people from different cultures and community. Some thoughts that emerge both from my experiences in Spain and currently Latin America. The starting points of these reflections are a few keywords that were referred to –or not– yesterday. These words are: “community”, “social space”, “citizenship”, “interaction and participation”, “mediation”; another one that only came out once among the public is “fear”; and finally “fissure” or “crack” or “breach”. I have done a small survey among the people here who speak Catalan, and I am still not sure if the word “escletxa” in the title of this forum “Entre escletxes”<sup>1</sup> means ‘crack’ or ‘breach’. But I see now that it is fine, since the truth is that we do not know if it is crack or breach.

My contribution is not intended to cover the word in depth, but only some aspects that interest us, related to artistic practice, social space, citizenship and community.

### Community

There are three aspects that I find interesting in the definition of community. What defines a community, among other things, is an imaginary construct, a symbolic representation. These are the first two aspects; I will talk about the third later. I am very much interested in the *imaginary construct* and *symbolic representation*, two features that define community. Why? Because I think that art plays a significant role in building a community. I do not refer to communities on their land but those of the Diaspora. We are in a country that is becoming more and more multicultural because of immigration. I think that helping, through art, assisting the creation of an imaginary construct and symbolic representation of a community is a fundamental contribution. What do I mean by this? I mean what we already know: the Jews, Armenians and Palestinians were communities without land. Today we have many communities without land. When we speak of Pakistanis in Barcelona, we are not speaking about Pakistanis in Karachi; it is another community.

What is the “place” of these communities without land? If we take a look at young people, there are two places. One is the sphere or *territory of violence*. Some of the immigrant youth have settled in the territory of violence; an emerging phenomenon in Spain, but dif-

1. Translator’s note: QUAM 2010 “Entre escletxes. Ciutadanes i pràctiques artístiques en codi obert” (Cracking the system. Art and Citizenship, open source in public realm.)

ferent in France than in New York where there is significant Dominican or Puerto Rican immigration. In all cases, there is a territory that is created through violence.

And there is another territory, and I believe this should interest you: young people in Holland, Germany, France, and so forth that are born in communities in the Diaspora. In these communities without land; these youngsters create their territory in art, through urban culture, graffiti, rap and hip-hop. My point is that the fact that you may be leading these youngsters deprived of a physical territory of their own towards a peaceful and artistic environment does not seem trivial to me.

Community is also –and this is the third of so many features that I find interesting– is a *place of exclusion*: “you are either in, or out”. What defines my community with respect to you is that “I am, and you are not”. Therefore, entering a community is like entering a hostile place. A community is not, as we often imagine, a place for solidarity, union, and so forth. As Westerners, we have a very kind, idyllic conception about what a community is. Community means also exclusion: in order to exist, a community has to exclude. It is also a place for social control, to be able to exist as a community.

I would like to say something about Pablo, from Democracia, who gave me the permission to do so, and I suppose he will explain this later. When he carries out a project in Manresa, using messages in Arabic, not only he intervenes in the space of Manresa, but is also subject to, whether in Cartagena or Manresa, intra-communitarian reactions; which is good, if you are able to more or less control it. Further on, I will continue talking about incidents on our interventions in public space.

### Social space

The other word I was interested in is “social space”. Someone referred to it as a place of conflicts, since it is a space where different territories converge. I think it is very important not to only speak about this social space, but also make visible the different territories that compose it. Territories that overlap, and are often confronted with each other; territories that move away from each other and get closer. All public space is full of various communities, and consequently, of physical and symbolic territories.

Yesterday Laia told us that she passed from being a “local” to being a “visitor”; and that is because the

Pakistanis deprived her of her territory and took on a symbolic one, much more powerful than hers. Therefore, I think that this issue of public space and its different territories is very rich and essential for your work. However, it is also very complex.

The overriding theme of my presentation is that, whether you want it or not, your interaction or lack of it is having, whether passively or actively, an impact in the public space. When I say that the public space is full of different territories, I mean that what you can do with an intervention can have much more impact than you think, and that is fine. I will later speak about worries.

### Citizenship

Yesterday Josep said that there was the need for new narratives and I agree with that. But, Simon also pointed out that new definitions of citizenship were needed. Because if we stay with the old definition of citizenship, many of us will be excluded, without citizenship. Where would we like to stand? Clearly, not within the citizenship defined by law and manuals. The place that we are interested in is that of social citizenship, which today is also related to transnational citizenship. I will not talk about this latter. But I will say that social citizenship is the place that allows us “to be”; “to be” with no papers, “to be” with no money, “to be” with no job, “to be” with no home. Social citizenship, in today’s megalopolis, is where we can remain human. And the fact that you create spaces for interaction and participation for those who do not have “the” citizenship, is, in my opinion, deeply political and transformative. And necessary. Today, it is necessary.

I will not get into the controversy over political discourses. I think I should not get into that. But I think it is absolutely necessary to create social citizenship, by offering a space of participation to the marginalized. Why? Because facing the crisis of values that was discussed yesterday, this confusion – and I would add, in this deafening void where sometimes I yearn for silence – it is absolutely necessary to create new references. We have seen that political parties are not a reference for the young people. Participation, as seen in the seventies and eighties and even nineties, is no longer a place where the majority is acknowledged. More on this later.

Yesterday morning, someone asked: “how to live together and represent a multitude?” I think the question is not so much about representing a multitude, but allowing all of it to develop. Because, precisely and

paradoxically, in this increasingly diverse world where we must seek unity in diversity, we will converge only if we get to develop all the nuances. I'll explain myself.

It is not true that unity connects us to each other. Unity is always conservative; it is repressive and somehow dictatorial. We will connect and coexist in the nuances. That is why differences are so important. And that is why what is happening today –and tomorrow- here, in Catalonia, does not make sense and is against modernity; because unity, togetherness, can only happen peacefully if we take care of diversity. What do I mean by this? If you define me as a single mold, if there is only one definition of what Catalonia or Spain are, or what the Arab community is, if I give a sealed definition of myself, and you do the same, then there is no place for us to meet. We have to surface all our differences and diversity, because it is in these nuances where bridges are built. Managing diversity is more complex than managing unity; this is why we tend towards the latter. But our peaceful and competent coexistence lies in the acknowledgement of our differences. I think that today, in times of crisis –crisis of values, as you said yesterday- the potential of art to create alternatives and, above all, to surface the diversity and nuances is huge. Ability to bring out the nuances and also render visible those who are not.

### Interaction and participation

Yesterday I heard the verbs “to point out”, to destabilize”, “to question”, “to make visible” and “to repair”. Public space is obviously full of asymmetries. Public space is also full of conflicts. And territories are creating more conflicts. I am afraid that in times of asymmetries, in times of no citizenship, to point out, to question, to make visible is, I am afraid –since our philosophers and politicians are not doing it-, your job. If you are up for it.

Pablo was telling me about his experience in Manresa, where they posted messages in Arabic in different places of the city; old political slogans, from my days, like: “All power to the people”. The messages provoked different feelings and reactions. First, outrage of some people who felt attacked because they could not understand what was posted in their city. I asked Pablo if the reaction would be the same if these messages were written in Japanese. And he said: “Of course not!”, to which I answered: “But they wouldn't have understood it in Japanese either.” And he responded: “No, they wouldn't have understood and, moreover, they would have appreciated the beauty of

Japanese calligraphy.” I said: “Sure, because the *noise* that Arabic and Japanese calligraphy make are not the same today.”

This made them feel at a certain space in the city. I am telling you this because maybe from where we stand, which is the place of the Spanish citizen, who has papers, etc., etc., we see some actions to be trivial, non-significant. And in general we give more importance to the product than the process and what this latter does to people. However, in times of asymmetry, to achieve that part of the local population where you intervene feels more welcome and part of this place does not seem insignificant to me. You feel so because you do not know what it is like, to be outside of the territory.

Therefore, it seems to me that questioning, making visible and pointing out are *generous* gestures –if I may use this term following what we said yesterday about religion- for those who have no visibility nor voice.

### Mediation

In the realm of intercultural mediation where I stand, we do not refer to mediation when it comes to pointing out, to bringing up, etc. You call it that way, but that is not important. What seems quite interesting is the idea that was discussed yesterday; the possibility of changing from being a “local” to being a “visitor” and vice versa. When it comes to mediation, you artists have the possibility to jump from being protagonists to being invisible, from being protagonists to being neutral. Josep mentioned yesterday –maybe we didn't give it much importance because it was late and we were “warmed up”: you have the possibility to change and create new methodologies. I do not have that option; as a mediator, I have to be a protagonist and I have only one methodology. And I think that very few people, very few professionals have this ability to jump between non-protagonism and protagonism and to change methodologies. You may probably be the only ones.

I am almost done. When the objective is to work with people, it is so, with all that entails. Yesterday I felt some exasperation but also compassion seeing your concern about funding, “being sold” to the funders, about dispersing when working with other institutions. And I was telling Ramon: “But the people, when we are working with the people, we all are concerned with these issues. And there are risks to be taken. You are either in it or not. Risks have to be taken.”

Why, do you think that the NGO that takes eyeglasses

to Rwanda or Congo does not have a disturbed conscience thinking that Congo could be one of Africa's richest countries and that they might be playing it up to the Government of Congo? Or you think that only you have these concerns? Do you think that when a group of people asks for funding in Madrid does not worry about their ties with the Government and what they are going to do with the money? Do you think that nurses, doctors, social workers, psychologists sharing a workspace, have never been worried about being dissolved and having to give away their jobs?

These issues worry us too, but working with people means this. And, as Rachel mentioned yesterday, we have to be smart. It is easier for you, because you can do whatever you want with the funding. They are going to see the result. And the process of participation and interaction belongs to you and the people you are working with. And whoever is funding your project does not get it; moreover, you are the only one who can do it. When I carry on a mediation project, they want to see what agreements we reach; they do not care about how I get to those agreements; and yet the change occurs during the process, not in the outcome. In a diverse world, and therefore a complex one, you are not going to do anything alone.

Consequently, if the “art” institution has to question its words, language or whatever it is, it is probably something really healthy. But in my opinion, if the “art” institution is questioning its dealings, it belongs to a movement in this world that is constantly questioning itself. I do not see why you should not worry about dispersing, facing others, losing areas... Being in this world means passing through all this.

### Finally, fissures

Yesterday I was thinking about what happens when there is a fissure, a crack. At first, you do not see it. Then, three things happen: you either cover it up with some filler, or leave it so that it gets wider, or you get into it. In each of the three actions, you are acting politically. In this, everybody does what they want. This is what I think about fissures.

I want to finish with fissures in adverse times. We stand in adverse times, and today, the fissures we want to get into are the only places for change and freedom. And I go back to citizenship: some people can not get into the fissure. Those of us who can, if we have the courage, should get into it.

In a few days Josep will go to Chile and will get under a tent with forty-nine families. There he says goodbye

to the world, to go on thinking about how to build the houses. Laia was stripped of her territory; she lent it to a community without one, and got from being a local to being a visitor in the visitor's territory; all this by just asking where she could find a cricket ball. And Pablo has achieved two things with these messages: that a few Moroccan people that have lived for some years in a place feel proud to show their alphabet to the city and, moreover, feel surprised and emboldened. Because these messages in Arabic said: “All power to the people”. Never before had they seen this written in Arabic on t-shirts, not even in their own countries. Getting into the fissures in adverse times –I said it in the first meeting in Barcelona- is, for some, taking away the indignity that is part of the daily life of many people.

## PILAR BONET

# Alternative mobility: caravans and three-wheeler

We all remember the general euphoria of the turn of the century and millennium. We experienced that date as an opportunity to review the great history of the West, that of the twentieth century. Many voices analyzed the progress and failure of our century, the role science and technology played and also the genealogies of the most important artists. We knew that we would never again experience a preliminary timeline like that. Memory and nostalgia alternated with hopes and desires of the modern times. Enormous changes and unprecedented historical processes of the twentieth century, still open to debate, placed us in a special moment to read our history in an attempt to understand the past and go on with the future. It was a hustle and bustle, a times of moves and lists of resolutions for the twenty-first century.

In this bustle, a journalist invited me to a brief interview on the highlights of twentieth century art and to speculate on the future of culture. When asked, "what would twenty-first century art be like?" -an unfathomable question- I said I believed there would be less production of material objects and more involvement in the public space and in community work practice; that the format would be less purist and more non-disciplinary, as it was already suggested at the end of the nineties. The journalist looked surprised and tried to understand what kind of aesthetic object I was describing. Disappointed by the lack of a more precise definition, he said: you mean "artworks" done with new technologies, such as electronic art?... So I thought the answer was already written, as always, and that newspapers expect art to be a comfortable topic, simply visual, to illustrate more important matters. The journalist did not need an answer intended for reflection, a critical one; he wanted a consumable and approved "image". Again, the question about what was expected of art was based on the surprise generated by the visual impact, rather than on the intellectual or political effect. What was requested was a definition of art as a big audiovisual scene, painting replaced by huge shiny advertisement façades in the metropolis. In the background of the question, the future of art seemed to consist of designing spectacles, since anything else would be considered as political intrusion or degeneration of the undesired "culture of complaint".

We have already passed the first decade of the future we apprehended and, indeed, we are able to observe how art has raised new debates and representation stages than technological spectacle and aesthetic



Intervention of Pilar Bonet with the two members of Doctor Urima, Jordi Canudas, Mercè Ortega, Núria Güell, Cristina Garrido i Raquel Frieria.

maximalism. The city, community, social policies, network or open source systems are fields of work and action for artists involved with their reality. In these cases, practice seeks to generate spaces for discussion and confrontation of ideas, but also new forms of action. In many situations, group work replaces the idea of the solitary and self-absorbed artist; the interest in intervening in the social field overrides the aesthetic tradition. Public space, the place for all and place of conflicts, collective and global stage, relational policies and urban subversion describe the most interesting aspects of artistic practice at the turn of the century.

A case study is the QUAM program which has dedicated various editions to debate issues related to public space, city, community and their conflicts or the notion of present continuous as an expression of artistic and political experience. In a short period of time, the concept of "public space" has acquired in the world of art multiple perspectives that seek to review and understand urban changes and processes, to analyze and refute conflicts of the city such as neoliberal politics, financial crisis, Real estate speculation, globalization of gentrification or the decline of the system. The city, and the conception of public space, has become an urban landscape to demand social debate and implement a culture of empowerment of the community, micropolitics. Many artists focus on the mechanisms of relationships and exchange between people in real

time; they have also made the effort to assess and re-read the personal experience of the urban individual or its specific context, whether this is social, cultural or geographical. These artistic productions promote active citizen participation, creating systems and open structures for democratic education in public domain.

The city now claims "alternative movements", through politics and social dialogue, as well as through forms of representation and action. Maybe the caravan and three-wheeler, as small private spaces moving around freely in the public space, are two good devices to speak about artistic alternatives of the twentieth century. Some projects have been redesigned in order to expand their field of social and political action.



**CARAVANS AND THREE-WHEELER.**

I would like to present projects by artists that could describe the image of “artwork” that the journalist needed to apprehend for twenty-first century art. Two automotive icons serve me for my argument: the caravan and the three-wheeler. They are modest architectures with roof and wheels, private spaces in the middle of the public sphere, moving around the city and its territorial and poetic periphery. Both are hybrid vehicles between personal architecture and the urban network. They are not only transport vehicles in the functional sense. These three caravans and one three-wheeler offer, as art projects, experience and coexistence, as well as a reading of reality.

**CARAVANATURA (2006).**

Núria Güell is an artist who addresses the issue of human relationships well, focusing on the experience of people in the urban world. The project CaravaNatura is a mobile device that offers an experience of solitude in the woods. The small architecture of the caravan is lent to people as a place for introspection, away from the noise of the city. The mobile home, located in the stillness of nature, can be lived in for a certain period of time: it offers an experience of disconnection from the hectic pace of the city, with the aim of generating a dialogue between what we are and what we think to be.

An artistic practice that focuses on new relational forms between art and life, experimenting with strategies of escape and reunion between urban anonymity and ourselves. The project can be conceived as a way to experiment and reflect on the everyday environment, which is constant in the artist’s creative process. The material generated through the experience (writings, drawings, photos) is displayed in an exhibition space that is also converted to a place for exchange and for stories.



**WHO’S SPEAKING? CALL FOR FREE (2007).**

Josep-Maria Martín’s projects focus on creating new strategies of intervention in social structures. His work, which is often materialized in the form of relational architecture and re-symbolization of the communal space, investigates the processes of participation and social dialogue. The artist creates, in a caravan that moves around different cities, a toll-free phone booth; an itinerant space that allows us to reflect on communication, beyond the phenomenon of migration. The anonymous passerby is invited to use this public device and call anywhere in the world. For the next ten minutes, the interior becomes a space for conversations, interaction and mediation. The artist asks the users to indicate the place where they called on a world map and to participate in the creation of new stories, through a game of real and invented story telling, in order to create new collective imaginaries. This gives way to a real experience of the complex problem of communication.

The material generated from the phone calls, conversations, map, and writings make a subjective record on immigration, through voice, words and images. The debate and confessions, as well as the desires and nostalgia, are real.

**WE CAN XALANT. NOMADIC ARCHITECTURE AND SELF-CONSTRUCTION LABORATORY (2008).**

Another project in which the mobile caravan becomes an interface with the community is that of the architects of the Argentinean collective a77 and Pau Faus, in Mataró: "We Can Xalant". The project proposed a reinterpretation, using two recycled caravans, of the old construction of Tadashi Kawamata in the courtyard of Can Xalant, known as the "Chiringuito de Mataró" (The Kiosk of Mataró). It also proposed to develop a mobile unit understood as an extension of the center in the public space. It was about collective construction through a network of institutions and people that represented Can Xalant's immediate environment. The installation of the caravans and the circulation of one of them in the city brought in new strategies for analysis and intervention in the territory, exploring dynamics of collaboration. The participation of artists, architects, designers, educators, sociologists and students generated new reflections on mobile and flexible architectures as new cultural practices. The experience of collective construction goes beyond the idea of materiality to become a structure of exchange and relationship.

**MOTOCARRO (2010).**

Domènec's proposal consisted of making, as part of a training course for young people, a replica of the three-wheeler used in the film *Plácido* (shot in Manresa) by Luís García Berlanga. The vehicle became a small commemorative work, in the shadow of the critical perspective of the cinematic narrative; an ironic device or sort of a capsule of critical review of our country's past. This vehicle was very popular in Spain in the fifties and sixties, although nowadays it practically does not appear in our urban landscape.

Moving around the city, the three-wheeler became a multimedia device to project films in the street or to be used as a point of information thanks to its speakers. It may even be used as a transport for alternative tourism in emerging zones of Manresa, where the project was produced as part of *Idensitat 5* (Seized Cities). The three-wheeler, just like the caravans, is identified with precarious economic situations; it is a mobile and informal space of survival, often carrying out non-regulated occupation of public spaces (camping, shared taxis, selling kiosk, etc.). As the caravans, this vehicle allows subverting the organization of the urban fabric, generating complicities and new relationships in the public space.

**11.30H. ARTISTIC PRACTICE IN THE SOCIAL SPACE, BETWEEN INTERACTION, PARTICIPATION AND MEDIATION.**

**QUAM, VIC, SATURDAY JULY 10, 2010.**

All this is part of what I wanted to present in this session of QUAM10. However, as the audience knows, I made a last minute change in the format of my presentation and asked various artists in the room to share the conference with me. Thus, I stopped being the main voice and huddled at one end of the table to share the stage with artists who work in the public space; people that I know and appreciate. We have all exchanged thoughts and doubts, as between students and teacher. Participants: Jordi Canudas, Núria Güell, Cristina Garrido, Raquel Frieria, both members of Doctor Urima and Mercè Ortega.

We know **JORDI CANUDAS** as an artist involved in the creation of archives for urban memory and concerned about the relational policies of degraded civic networks. His latest works put forward spaces of memory and relationship, such as *Màcula. La vida en blanc* (Macula. Life in white, 2010). The project consisted of displaying a blackboard in the public space of La Vireina, where anonymous writing gave citizens a voice about their daily experiences related to AIDS, avoiding stigmatizing exposure in a neighborhood such as Raval. The urban furniture suggests a public space where one can generate dialogue about social conflicts of marginalization through intimacy and coexistence. Once more, the artist addresses the public space to create a community, with the aim of intervening in the social processes of the big city.

**NÚRIA GÜELL, CRISTINA GARRIDO AND RAQUEL FRIERA** are three artists who have carried out, individually or collectively, various projects marked by the experience of the urban world, identity politics and new markets of globalization. For example, in the *Barcelona Fora de Camp* (2006) project, they invited visitors of the city to an alternative Tourist Bus route through the "less beautiful" circuits. Map in hand, the tourists could visit dumpsites and less symbolical areas of the capital; areas that do not represent any brand identity, nor promotional displays, but the social reality and urban fabric outside main urban plans. The small sabotages of institutional indifference or the recovery of personal time are working tools that are common in their projects. The aesthetic will proposes alternative experiences and reflections in which emotional and political aspects are inseparable.

For their part, the two artists of the collective **DOCTOR URIMA** work with issues related to security control systems and regulations in the city, designing humorous and functional informative alternatives of the public space. In their *Metrorisc* guide brochure distributed in the Barcelona subway, they advise us on uses and dangers of the metropolis in case of a terrorist attack, generating social criticism through camouflage and parody.

In *Segunda piel*, **MERCÈ ORTEGA** lives in the body of another character, a clown. She lives the daily life of a mother, student and neighbor, dressed in an identity that offers her new experiences with her environment. The image of the clown outside of the circus context is a sabotage of common prejudices, especially of the fear and contempt for everything that is different. With no prior planning or script, the artist fuses her daily reality with a poetic and radical reading of the public space and psychological relationships.

Thank you very much to all, especially to the artists on stage, for creating social space in QUAM, for providing material for discussion on art and community, for involving us in the possibilities of action and letting us know that the art of the twenty-first century is more art when it ceases to be just art.

## The Mediabiography as Transformation of Everyday Narrative

### Memory and experimentation as practice

The idea of the mediabiography, or this very post-poetic proposal in which technology is shown as a connection of life, and as part of this, its recording, archiving and displaying, was originally intended to create collaborative storylines that observe the transformation of everyday life. My intention as a writer and visual artist lies to a large extent within the need to accentuate both word and image simultaneously. The storyline (word and image) itself is propagated through other storylines. I coined the notion of the "mediabiography" in my book of stories and photographs *Veinticuatro contratiempos* which was published in 2002. Later, in my essay *Imagen, tecnología y cultura: El tiempo narrado*, (published in 2003 in my book, *Trompe la mémoire. Historia y visualidad*), I developed the mediabiography in relation to experimentation with storylines; and later, in a shared proposal in the book *El instante de la memoria*.

The mediabiography follows an interdisciplinary approach that consists in experimenting with storylines involving word and image and in which different collectives and networks of people participate. Through a laboratory system or a travelling workshop, the participants are given suggestions of ways to experience storylines and create narratives from personal digital files.

The travelling workshop I have been giving for several years is directly related to the potential literature of the Oulipo workshop, forms of cinema, experimental literature and the fragmenting of space and time that the storylines generate. The experimental and experiential character is part of the relationship with visual technologies. In turn, the dynamic of the mediabiography's source code lies within the very idea of cinematic montage. The archive film has its origin in the work of *Esfir Shub* from the avant-garde Russian cinema of the early twentieth century. Storyline fragmenting, at the forefront of European work such as the cinematic work of Germaine Dulac and the literary work of Djuna Barnes, as well as certain narrative strategies of avant-garde American experimental cinema of the forties and fifties, with the work of Maya Deren and Jonas Mekas. The political experimentation of the cinema of the sixties and seventies which was avant-garde in Europe, broke off from the hand of Chris Marker, Jean-Luc Godard, and the New German Cinema movement as a point of inflection, the work of Helke Sander, Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, Alexander Kluge and Werner Herzog.

This source code is full of other source codes linked not so much to experimentation with the fiction story as with the documentary. Among them, the work of Abigail Child, Su Friedrich, Harum Farocki and Peter Forgács, or the "Analytical camera" method of Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi, that invades film archives to refilm and reconstruct them, detecting common threads in the storylines and deconstructing their original meaning.

It is interesting to note that Michael Renov situates the *Post-truth* period between 1970 and 1995 to show the reflexivity of the "I" through experimental documentary strategies, i.e. the appearance of "new subjectivities" in documentary enunciations. The mediabiography works with library footage and other recorded images that are the product of subjectivity in the space of the everyday; ultimately, images that have been converted into a document and which are subject to a rereading with the aid of technology.

Along these lines, the mediabiography is a concept that in practice seeks to raise awareness of the process of storyline construction, on the basis of real or fictitious facts described in the images and their negotiation. So-called "amateur" images produced in the past and today amplified by technologies for personal use suggests the convergence of video recordings, photographs and sound. Its post-production is part of this process – a post-production of memory, a display of the experience that definitively wipes out the idealisation of memory. We are therefore talking about a post-produced memory, told through life stories that give rise to fictions or shared life stories. We are talking about a post-memory of the everyday, an ethnography of the minimal, in the sense of what Marianne Hirsch explored in her book *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Post-memory*.

Post-memory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection with its object or its source is measured not through recollection, but through its installation, its investiture and its creation. This does not mean that memory is mediated in itself, but that it reinforces the idea that this is more directly connected to the past through the images that experience has generated. Its scope is not the past or the present but the future.

From objectification to representation, media globalisation, colonised visual codes, the panoptism of biopower denounced by the philosopher Michel Foucault, scientific taxonomisation, social regulation through the visual regime and the construction



Mediabiografía, Centro Cultural de España, Montevideo, Virginia Villaplana, 2009.

of the gaze as a strategy proposed in the seventies and eighties, were the starting point for the revisions based on the text *Placer visual y cine narrativo*, 1975, in which Laura Mulvey went into the notion of voyeuristic scopophilia in fictional cinema. In this regard, I would like to point out that inversely, the codes governing the document image allude to a displacement towards the politics of truth suggested by Hito Steyerl in his essay *La política de la verdad: Documentalismo en el ámbito artístico* and in his recent works such as *November* (2004) and *Lovely Andrea* (2007).

The notion of the mediabiography, in parallel, is based on the concept of the "technology of sex" which Teresa de Lauretis<sup>1</sup> calls "technology of gender", on the understanding that gender, in the same way as sexuality, is not a natural and spontaneous manifestation of sex or the expression of some intrinsic characteristics specific to bodies sexualised into masculine and feminine, but that bodies are like a surface on which – not without certain resistance on the subjects' part – the models and representations of masculinity and femininity spread by the hegemonic cultural forms of each society depending on the era are sculpted. Among the predominant discursive practices that act as "technology of gender", the author includes institutional discourses, the education system, practices from everyday life, internet, cinema, advertising, mass media etc., i.e. all those devices that are used at a given moment by the dominant culture and practice to name, define, capture or represent femininity (or masculinity), but that, while they name, define, capture or represent

1. Teresa de Lauretis. *Technologies of Gender*. Bloomington e Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987.

it, they also create it. Therefore, "the construction of gender is the product and the process both of the representation and the self-representation".

In this sense, the mediobiography as an experimental concept in practice is questioned on "technology of memory" as deposit and amplification of the images and their narration. The mediobiography is an exercise in returning to the future as opposed to the great commemorative hegemonic stories of the distant past. In contrast to the sweetened memory of history and politics that is dissolved in the global media sphere, the methodology of the mediobiography would be part of a micro politics through which to return a potentiality of resistance to private storylines.

### Shared forms. Storylines and infinity

The origins of the infinity symbol,  $\infty$ , are uncertain. Given that its form is similar to the lemniscate curve (from the Latin *lemniscus*, "ribbon"), it has been suggested that it represents a closed loop. The shape of the flag of Moebius can also be seen in it. The infinity symbol in literary history has been drawn as a metaphor with the possibility of sketching rhizomatic storylines that lead to other storylines: Calvino, Borges and Perec. In the literary work of Clarice Lispector, infinity appears as the nostalgia of other voices which are invoked in her storylines. In comparison with the contemplative paradigm of cinema, literature and art, and with them digitalised cultural production, the production of immaterial knowledge can be opened from various lines of work. Maya Deren's anagram project would be an almost archaeological example of source code, a project developed in her essays *Anagram of Ideas on Art, Form and Film* and *El cinematógrafo como forma artística* (1946). This reflection could help us answer the question at least in several different directions:

An anagram is a combination of letters which are related in such a way that each is simultaneously one element in a linear series. This simultaneity is real, regardless of the fact that normally they are perceived in succession. Each element of an anagram is related to the whole, in such a way that none of them can be changed without affecting the series and thus the whole. On the other hand, the whole is related to its parts that, however it is read, horizontally, vertically, diagonally or even in reverse, the logic of the whole is not affected, but remains intact. [...] In an anagram all the elements exist in a simultaneous relationship. Consequently, within it, nothing is first and nothing is

last, nothing is future and nothing is past; nothing is old and nothing is new.<sup>2</sup>

How to construct an infinite storyline is always dependent on why infinity is situated as a source code in the story – storylines that involve non-linear and clearly rhizomatic processes. This was the question I tried to answer in the archive exhibition *Infinite Cinema* at the Sala La Gallera in Valencia, and later, the book *Infinite Cinema*, that contains a reflection on the process; an essay book on stories, digital memories and the production of knowledge.

A definite sphere of activity in storyline creation and non-finite and procedural maps is applicable to the field of education and art. Some groups of educators and artists such as Videomachete (Chicago), Cascade (London), Repohistory (New York), Towersongs (Dublin), Centre for Urban Pedagogy (New York) and Park Fiktion (Hamburg) have worked on the generation of decentralised stories to be read in a social setting from the future to the present.

### In search of the lost future

The interest of the theoretical proposal that Andreas Huyssen examines in his essay *En busca del futuro perdido* is certainly relevant, as we find ourselves in an unprecedented historical moment. If at the beginning of the twentieth century they feverishly attended to the humanist and technological transformations to nourish the futurist vision, at the beginning of this millennium the longing to imagine gives way to reviewing the past, showing a wavering interest in the ideal of structuring, through ideologies, the virtues of the future. Andreas Huyssen analyses the events that determine the course of the culture of memory; i.e., the fractures and determinations in the collective imagery in national or regional contexts. The author explains that since the Holocaust, the fall of the Berlin wall or the military dictatorships in Latin America, memory responds to a social behaviour tinged by globalisation, the emergence of new nationalisms and military confrontations, and is touched by economical changes and by frenetic of events that cause communities to change course.

*En busca del futuro perdido* is based on the discussion of museums as watchtowers for the most relevant expression of the culture of memory, while criticising

2. Maya Deren. *Essential Deren. Collected Writings on Film by Maya Deren*. New York: MacPherson & Company, 2005, p. 35-36.

under a sociocultural focus what it has contributed to post modernity. Nevertheless, it is important that we point out that the excess of memory that Andreas Huyssen has been pointing out for some decades is marked by the is marked by the museology and media structuring of memory of which cultural industries are the protagonists, whose production refers to mass nostalgia marketing, to the writing of memoirs and confessions, the peak of the autobiography and of the postmodern historic novel, with its unstable negotiation between fact and fiction, to the diffusion of the practices of memory and visual art, often centred on photography, and to the increase in historical documentaries on television.

This leads us to ask ourselves what type of memory cultural industries have constructed and to what extent the culture of memory constructs storylines, stereotypes and closed ideological narratives. The spaces for dialogue to construct politics of memory and even a collaborative experimental approach like mediobiography can now be considered by taking into account those platitudes for storylines and those closed ideological narratives to overcome that moment of *impasse*.

It is therefore about turning towards a reflection on the strategies of representation of memory, archive narratives, forms of textual organisation, visual and audiovisual, of the corpora of documentary and testimonial images, which today seem to play an even more fundamental role than before. Personally I am more attracted to the material of Descartes, to documents that have not been catalogued and which generate other indexes. The strategy of *de-documenting* as opposed to documentation processes is something that we can consider a necessity – at least as an exercise in decolonisation of cultural imagery.

Writing, files and albums in their heyday helped structure storylines in the private realm. Only with an ethical stance towards technology can we face up to the use of memory as a technological effect. The culture of memory is a Western construct. This narrative construct throughout history has needed memory technologies and support to be transmitted. In other community cultures like those of the Cocama, Huitoto, Bora or Tikuna, on the edge of the Amazon Rainforest between Peru, Colombia and Brasil, do not share the sense of memory and time as divided between past, present and future – the transmission of their history is still oral and involves rhizomatic structures to tell what is necessary at any given time.



Mediobiografía, Centro Cultural de España, Montevideo, Virginia Villaplana, 2009.

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## Homeland

### Lu Mien Farm Tapes. Theoretical framework

HOMELAND is an initiative of Torolab -a collective Workshop/laboratory of multidisciplinary research-, which studies the construction of home territories and its impact on the identity of displaced, immigrant and refugee communities. The project is part of the Emergency Architecture proposals that, far from alluding to disaster allusions, explores context of possibilities and opportunities for responses, self-management systems and inhabitants' ideas about the quality of life.

Since 2009, HOMELAND has operated as a research platform for traditions, transitions and translations of the nomadic-agricultural Lu Mien community of Oakland, California. Originally from China, the Lu Mien have traveled a long way to the Western of the United States -where they settled in the 1980's-, passing through Vietnam, Laos and refugee Camps in Thailand from which they were displaced after their participation in the Vietnam War.

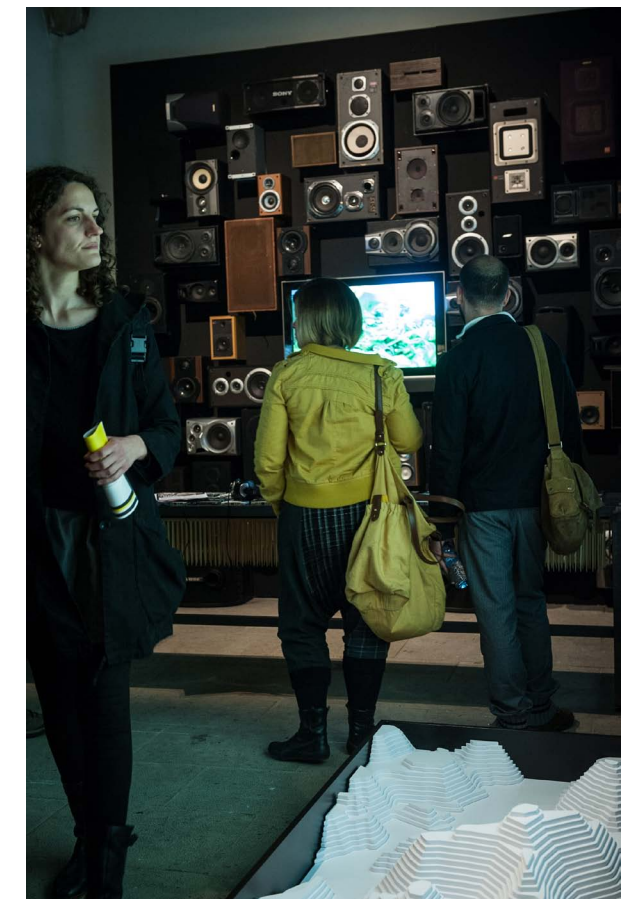
Throughout two years of work with the Lu Mien, Torolab has focused on the study of their cultural diversity and their territorial possibilities of integration, adaptation and implementation in a livable environment. As a result, it has developed mechanisms that aim to recover and preserve the oral tradition through audio recordings of storytelling and songs, as well as their working culture and survival strategies by means of alternatives that guarantee the viability of the farm in Oakland.

The project is currently ongoing thanks to the collaboration of social worker and agronomist Grey Kolevson; artists Julio Morales, Cal Volner Dison and Erik Wilson; the Youth Empowerment Schools (YES); the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI), EBAYC, the King States neighbor community, and the government of the city of Oakland.

*Homeland is an ongoing project about the construction of home territories and the constant re-evaluation of identities within nomadic, migratory and refugee communities.*



Lew Chien Saelee archive | refugee camp (Thailand-1985)



HOMELAND within the framework of the exhibition Craftmen and women Collective Constructions of the Social Space. La Capella, Barcelona, 2012. Photographies Pep Herrero



HOMELAND in the Craftsmen and women Collective Constructions of the Social Space. La Capella, 2012. Photography: Ferran Castrillo, Arxiu Lew, HOMELAND: Cassettes of the Lu Mien Farm.



Presentation of HOMELAND in the 8th Bienal of Mercosul, Porto Alegre, 2011. Photography: Livia Stumpf.

## Tradition, transition, translation

Raúl Cárdenas Osuna  
Interview with Paulina Cornejo - Independent curator  
Mexico City

Contemporary art seems to address some of modern society's deepest concerns, not only as tool for activating dialogue and exchange through creative initiatives, but as a triggering mechanism capable of catalyzing gradual social change by means of critical thinking. In this context, Torolab's HOMELAND project, suggests alternatives for the economical and cultural survival of the Lu Mien Community in Oakland, California.

**Paulina Cornejo:** When and how did the idea of working with the Lu Mien Community come?

**Raúl Cárdenas:** For a long time I was interested in the relations between city spaces with artistic practices, and how this affects the uses and meanings of the social sphere. Following these concerns, survival, environment and the relationship between the two have become a primary focus/approach for Torolab's work. I had the idea of working with home territories as part of the Emergency Architecture initiatives but it wasn't until 2009 that I was able to develop a project with the collaboration of the San Francisco Art Institute and Julio Morales of the City-Studio Program, who contacted me with the East Bay Asian Youth Center (EBAYC). Here I met Lew Chien, a Lu Mien woman who has become a part piece of the HOMELAND project thanks to a close collaboration with us.

**PC:** I understand the first intention of the HOMELAND project was to work directly in intervening in the Lu Mien farm and therefore enhancing community relations. At what point did you decide to begin a Cassette Archive and what is it all about?

**RC:** When we began working with Lew Chien and the community we became very interested in the lack of a written tradition in the Lu Mien language, in addition to their years of nomadism that led them to unique life stories. Perhaps the most critical moment was the Vietnam War, when the singularity of their language became a tool for the CIA against the communist threat. The end of the conflict in 1975 led to American abandonment of the Lu Mien and the diaspora of many of them to subhuman refugee camps in Thailand. During this time, the women accessed the tape recorders used by men who supported the Americans and

started to use them to record their histories and songs in order to share them with their families.

We realized all this when we worked in the Oakland farm, so while we kept doing so, we decided to turn off the video cameras and began the audio-mail archive in order to recover, by means of a more familiar tape recording medium, some of their memory through the women story telling and songs.

**PC:** Can you tell us more about the Farm work processes and its impact in the community?

**RC:** The work process has been (literally) organic. The Lu Mien traditions, due to their agricultural nomadism, have positioned the community in a middle point where they are not stationery nor fully nomadic. The survival conditions, as well as their own shamanic laws, lead them to move in ten-year cycles. At the present time in the United States the Lu Mien face difficulties in having more urban space, which is risking the preservation of their agricultural knowledge as well as of other traditions. The difficulties for older members to learning English and for the younger ones to learn the Lu Mien language has also contributed to family disintegration and fracture of the social structure, while rapidly assimilating members of the community in to the American Culture in a more aggressive way than other migration cases of migration.

Having said so, the Farm aims to achieve family and intercultural integration. This is why we are currently working on the construction of a "mobile Shed" to give projection to the Farm, and developing different strategies for promoting and selling the organic California certified products of the Farm. We are confident that this will contribute to create jobs and preserve the traditions.

**PC:** Besides preserving the cultural traditions, cases like the Lu Mien paradoxically suggest that the work of immigrant communities can be an effective alternative to the migration of food from other latitudes or what is called "food miles". ¿What could you tell us about this?

**RC:** The relationship between food circulation and distribution depends inherently of the production dynamics, and it can only be evaluated on individual basis. In the Lu Mien Farm case, the Tapes become an effective alternative to mainstream distribution channels, while being on the same level as initiatives that are articulated beyond the Art world, which fall within the realm of social policies.



**PC:** While differences between urban and rural contexts increase, the HOMELAND project has made it possible for a rural initiative to become urban. How does this impact the essence of the community models and traditions?

**RC:** HOMELAND works as a conciliatory tool in the transition processes. The abrupt change from rural to urban communities becomes more dramatic in nomadic-rural groups such as the Lu Mien, where the translation of their traditions is not compatible with the western style of urban living, nor to its idiosyncrasies. Therefore, the Lu Mien Farm, Archive, Distribution and Educational models bring a humbling alternative to the essence of the urban community, which lacks of connections to the rural life.

**PC:** What kind of vegetables and fruits do you grow?

**RC:** We grow the vegetables and fruits they sowed in Laos and Thailand, such as Chinese long bean, yellow cantaloupe, onion, mustard, winter pumpkin, coriander and also regional fruits like strawberry.

**PC:** Who are your consumers? How do they purchase products from the Farm?

**RC:** Our primary consumers are the six Lu Mien families that take part in the project and the San Francisco Torolab team. The rest of our products, as well as the ones from other local organic farms, are offered through our Farm Mobile Module to the Oakland elementary schools network.

**PC:** What are the plans for the future?

**RC:** We are currently working in the development of an eight-acre second farm in the urban area of King States in Oakland City, which neighbors a Youth Empowerment School (YES) for kids with economic and family problems. The work plan is being developed in collaboration with the school, neighbors and the Social Practice Program in the Arts of the California College of the Arts (CCA) with the participation of Ted Purves and Grey Kolevson (founder member of the first Lu Mien Farm).

**PC:** Can you tell us more about the concept and ideas behind the second farm and how is it different from the first one?

**RC:** Both farms have different routes. Basically, the products of the second farm will be “educative”. The idea is that the Lu Mien become teachers as they do their work, and the Farm becomes a school for its visitors. While both of the farms produce economic benefits and aim to be social conciliators, the latter also offers an experimental space for artistic practice in the social sphere on a more academic scale than the original farm.

**PC:** Do you consider the HOMELAND project replicable in other locations?

**RC:** Yes! HOMELAND, as well as other of my projects are absolutely replicable and can evolve according to the contexts and circumstances of study. For instance, it does not have to be a communitarian project based on food, as the Lu Mien chapter, instead it can be something regarding Language+Communication, Architecture+Design, Shoes+Clothing or any kind of possibilities inherent in any community situated on the outer rims of what we consider a “normal” way of life. Just as the Lu Mien, we hope to find new communities in every place we exhibit HOMELAND.

**PC:** The Torolab art projects intend to activate specific contexts through local interventions and communitarian processes. Some of the strategies developed for HOMELAND act as a bridge that aims to contribute to community cultural endurance, over two years of work what reflections can you share on this regard?

**RC:** That Torolab is not interested in the idea of having an archive that does not have a real and effective impact in its context of study, not even as an artistic and / or transdisciplinary practice. However, if the archive reflects a case study but also a direct interven-

tion within the community in which it is working and “collaborating”, it will have deeper and more exciting dynamics that can yield better results concerning the reevaluation, questioning and promotion of change towards an aesthetic that foregrounds not only knowledge, but human development beyond conventional means.

This is the case of the Lu Mien tape archive, or the recipe book and video archive, currently under construction, which documents the culinary traditions of the community, while making it accessible through diverse media channels to people interested in discovering some of the Lu Mien dishes that can be cooked with particular vegetables grown in the farm.

*“On the farm in Laos, we just select the area that we would like to have a farm and clean the area, burn trees and start planting. But in the US, here we have to do a lot of paperwork, you know, I call it farming on paper”.*

Lew Chien Saelee, Interview with Raúl Cárdenas Osuna, April 2009

**Torolab Team:** Raúl Cárdenas Osuna, Ana Martínez Ortega, Diego Becerra and Rodolfo Argote.

This project wouldn’t be possible without the dedication of Paola Santoscoy and Ramiro Azevedo.

The text published here was presented at the 8th Mercosul Biennial: Essays on Geopoetics | September 10th - November 15th 2011 | Porto Alegre, Brazil

## Lu Mien recipes

### VEGETABLE SOUP WITH BEAN PASTE SAUCE

#### Vegetable soup

8	cup	chicken broth
½	cup	acelgas
1	tsp	chile serrano pepper, chopped
4 ½	tsp	lemongrass, chopped
2	tsp	spearmint, chopped
4	tbsp	cambray onion stem, chopped
3	tbsp	coriander, chopped
½	cup	celery, chopped
200	grams	green beans
1 ½	cup	mushrooms, sliced
2	tbsp	fish sauce
1 ½	tbsp	ginger, chopped

Cook for 30-40mins. serve with a tbsp of bean paste sauce.

#### Bean Paste Sauce

Boil (approx. 10 mins), then grind in a mortar

½	cup	thai pepper
3		garlic clove
½	cup	water

add :

½	cup	bean paste
½	cup	coriander

#### GRILLED FISH

Marinate:

3	tsp	bean paste
1	tsp	sugar
1/8	tsp	sesame oil
1	tsp	soy sauce
1	tsp	peanut oil
1	tsp	lemongrass, chopped
1	tbsp	coriander, chopped

## Communities in conflict

The actions that Democracia carries out in the public space are based on the belief that this latter should be a space, not of consensus, as it is frequently presented, but a place where conflicts are made visible. A place where the clashes between the different interests of the different communities of civil society are explicit. A heterogeneous civil society, far from the consensual uniformity with which coexistence within the democratic system is implicitly represented.

Moreover, we have to take into consideration that we are living in times where the interest for public art by public and private institutions has become a kind of advertising for them, in which such concepts as participation and interaction are presented as substitutes to real social action. In this setting, we must ask ourselves how to reverse or at least resist such a situation of cooptation and neutralization.

We would like to present here three Democracia projects in which we have tried to escape the usual logic of art in public spaces as well as its possible neutralization by the artistic and/or institutional system. The projects do not aim at establishing a methodology, as the nature of the changing dynamics of public spaces advise against it. However, they do put forward a number of conclusions that can be considered as strategies open for application in artistic practice within the social field.

### **Do not allow yourselves to be consoled, Bordeaux, 2009. A collaborative project with football ultras**

In 2009 we participated in *Evento*, a project that took place in Bordeaux. With the aim of rethinking the concept of the biennial, the curator Didier Fiuza Faustino proposed working with specific interventions in the spaces of the city that could move around in different parts of the urban fabric. Democracia proposed a project to be carried out in collaboration with the Ultramarines, the ultras of the Girondins de Bordeaux football team; a community faced with municipal power, struggling not only because of the media association of the ultras with violence, but also because of its anti-system political group attribute.

The project consisted of insertions of political statements within the spectacle of football (in this case the match between Girondins de Bordeaux and Stade Rennes, on September 27, 2009) that questioned the logic of the show. The maxims (Do not allow yourselves to be consoled; The truth is always revolutionary; No idols; They order because we obey; We own nothing except our time; Suffering is the sole nobility;

The main battlefield is the mind of the enemy) were displayed on banners that the ultras held during the match. They were also used for the production of a special edition of merchandise of the club (scarves, flags, pennants, shirts and stickers) put for sale at an itinerant kiosk. Thus, the framework of the cultural event allowed us the use of the club's image, having the Ultras as accomplices, in order to clarify their ideological positioning in the stands, in front of the stadium and the television audience of the match.

In his essay about the "emancipated spectator", Jacques Rancière explains, "*The effect of the idiom cannot be anticipated. It calls for spectators who are active as interpreters, who try to invent their own translation in order to appropriate the story for themselves and make their own story out of it. An emancipated community is in fact a community of storytellers and translators. I am aware that all this may sound as: words, mere words. But I would not hear this as an insult. (...) Knowing that words are only words and spectacles only spectacles may help us understand how words, stories and performances can help us change something in the world where we are living*". If Rancière refers to the spectator of art, theatre, performances, why not include the spectator of football? Because if we are talking about emancipated and active spectators, those are the ultras who defend their own territory, aware of their place in the architecture of expectation, that in the case of football lies in the south end; they represent "the popular tribune". The ultras are self-managed, autonomous organizations, which is in itself a political standing against business-oriented football -the most contemporary expression of an alienating spectacle? -, that make their class and community demands through flags, chants and banners.

The collaboration between Democracia and the Ultramarines consisted in finding a common language (retrieving words) to represent a shared ideology<sup>1</sup>. At

1. The very history of the Girondins de Bordeaux is characterized by a libertarian tradition. Salvador Artigas was a football player who during the Spanish Civil War served as pilot in the Republican Army. He drove the last Republican plane out of Spain. Upon landing in France he was taken to the Gurs concentration camp. Benito Diaz got him and Paco Mateo out of the camp so that they can play with his team, the Girondins de Bordeaux. Paco Mateo, not so much known in Spain, was an idol in Bordeaux, so much that the posters wrote: "The Girondins are playing with Mateo". Other republicans in exile also played with the team at that time: Mancisidor and Urtizbera. Together they won the first official title of the Girondins de Bordeaux, the French Cup in 1941, during the German occupation. Urtizbera scored the two goals that took the Bordeaux team to victory.



Ne vous laissez pas consoler. (Do not allow yourself to be consoled), 2009

the same time, as the Ultramarines themselves interpreted, it represented an act of demand of a conflicted community within the communication platform provided by this significant art event in the city; a matter that underlines the importance of the "symbolic capital" that a particular community can generate as a reaffirmation of its difference and strengthening of its autonomy<sup>2</sup>.

### **Without State, Illegal settlements in Cañada Real Galiana (Madrid). Work in progress**

The project *Without State* (collaborative project between Todo Por la Praxis, Santiago Cirugeda and Democracia) was proposed as a social intervention that offered the neighborhood associations and NGOs in the settlements of La Cañada Real (Madrid)<sup>3</sup> a collaboration from the spheres of art and architecture to address specific problems that provided the necessary financial resources for its own development, just at a time when these settlements were subject to eviction

2. The Ultramarines refused any financial assistance that we could offer in order to preserve their autonomy; the benefits of the sales of the merchandise were donated to a network of community kitchens in Bordeaux.

3. The Cañada Real Galiana is an ancient transhumance route with more than two thousand houses and nearly forty thousand inhabitants spread out across ten miles of land. The first buildings date back to the seventies, when residents of nearby municipalities (Vallecas and Getafe, etc.) built small cottages there. With the passage of time the settlement has grown, and has become arranged with increasing complexity. There is a large population of long-time residents, to which have been added both domestic and foreign immigrants, the latter including mostly Moroccans and Romanians. In the space of La Cañada Real, drug trafficking coexists alongside business construction on public land, slum shantytowns alongside chalets, and illegal hotels alongside farmhouses.



## LA CAÑADA ES REAL

CAÑADA REAL GALIANA GALLINERO

Without State. Poster La Cañada es Real, 2009.

and demolition under an intense media campaign that criminalized their inhabitants.

The very essence of this project lay in the fact that it was financed through grants for art projects that came from the same administration that was responsible for that situation; something that was made possible through a grant for art creation by Matadero<sup>4</sup>. So, while the departments of Planning and Environment openly opted for the demolition of La Cañada, the department of Arts of the Municipality of Madrid gave a grant for an art project that would be used to question its own urban policy through actions of social character.

Among the various interventions carried out in La Cañada Real at the request of the associations and residents, we can mention the construction of stands for the football field (one of the few social spaces of La Cañada), the publishing and distribution of *The evicted's guide* that informed the residents of legal formulas that prevent evictions or stop the demolition of their houses, and the construction of classrooms with recy-

4. Matadero Madrid. Contemporary Art Center of the Municipality of Madrid. Grants for creation 2009.

clad containers to be used for training courses for the residents. Moreover, various actions were carried out to provide La Cañada Real with symbols and iconography of its own, to confront the image of the territory that the media was propagating.

The title of the project, *Without State*, suggests two interpretations. On the one hand, it responds to the explicit intention of using public funding destined for contemporary art, to divert them towards interventions of social character in an area where the same administration refuses to run any public service. On the other hand, it refers to a marginal and unregulated territory, lacking in legal and administrative structures.

A key point of the project *Without State* is its willingness to "accompany"; it does not arise as a specific action, but as a work in progress that follows the evolution of the situation and maintains an ongoing dialogue with residents and associations, and that currently aims to build a park in a slum area and design a master plan of La Cañada, an alternative to the official plan proposed by the Community of Madrid.

### Subtextos, Manresa, 2010

In the performing arts subtext is what lies beneath the text, that is, the vital emotions, feelings, ideas or concepts hidden within the lines of each dialogue, what each character thinks and feels truly in his heart but does not say explicitly in the dialogue. If we think of the city as a text that has been written with the messages that proliferate in public space, its subtext would be the antagonisms existing between the different communities that make up a particular citizenship. Aspirations, claims, self-representations that are never reflected in the channel for communication which public space itself represents.

This project by Democracia took shape as an action in the communication media. It addressed a specific community of the city of Manresa: Moroccan immigrants. The strategy consisted of inserting messages written in Arabic<sup>5</sup> in sign boxes in the city and broadcasting advertisements on local television. These messages aimed at highlighting the inherent heterogeneity of civil society: if, on one hand, the language used in the texts was readable only among the Moroccan

5. Following is a translation of the different messages in arabic: There are no spectators; Do not allow yourselves be consoled; All power to the people; Freedom, what for? ; No idols; The main battlefield is the mind of the enemy; Slavery grows without limit when it appears as freedom; They order because we obey; Diversity is life, uniformity is death.



Subtextos Manresa, 2010.

community, on the other, the other communities were made aware of them and their cultural and social particularities within the life of society through the Arabic script that appeared as institutional propaganda.

In a second stage, the project involved the *Bages per a Tothom* association that works for intercultural dialogue. The collaboration consisted in the production of a television program proposing a debate with representatives of the Moroccan community of Manresa about the meaning of the messages in Arabic in the city as well as the experience they had with them.

This project revealed latent racism in Catalan society, leading to the opening of a Facebook<sup>6</sup> group against the project, the attack on the sign boxes, as well as the reaction of local media who criticized the appropriateness of such a proposal during an economic crisis and an eventual cultural confrontation, advocating some kind of a pact of silence about the reality of a multicultural society and the conflicts that this entails.

Facing the racist reactions of the citizens of Manresa and the local media's agitation, the Municipality, represented by the Councilor for Culture, announced the failure of the project that should have driven to an understanding between the different communities instead of leading to an open confrontation. As for *Bages per a Tothom*, it saw in the project an opportunity to extend its field that needed to stimulate public discussion. This project and the controversy created around it provided an opportunity for dialogue about the official policies of integration and the model that is being

6. EN CONTRA DE LA PUBLICITAT ARAB! volem saber que s'anuncia al nostre país! (AGAINST ARAB PUBLICITY! We want to know what is advertised in our country!) <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?v=all&ref=mf&gid=108539455850339> (visited on 11-11-2010)

implemented to enable the coexistence of different cultural communities in Manresa.

### Context, Camouflage, Communication

We can refer to the above mentioned projects as open source artistic practice in the sense that they are not original; inserting in the media, through guerilla tactics, narratives and messages that differ from the hegemonic ones or putting tools that are quintessential to art and architecture at the service of a social movement or a specific community, are common practices. The originality of the art itself, understood as an aesthetic novelty, loses here its meaning, as it is the context that is loaded with significance. These are strategies that acquire their effectiveness depending on where and when they are implemented, and not their originality.

On the other hand, we also sought the anonymity of the projects, by not labeling them as "art". The collective perception of the art space as a place where anything fits and everything is allowed also leads to the dissolution of its potential for creating spaces of friction, discussion and reflection. This camouflage allows transcending the purely artistic sphere and going beyond a specialized public within a predetermined circle.

These are the issues that involve one main concept, which is no more than understanding art as a communicative and entirely public action with the objective of questioning the dominant ideology, which basically is nothing but the prevailing description of the world.





Fadaiat, Strait of Gibraltar

### Back Home, Domo project

While all this was happening, we were repeatedly witnessing in Barcelona the closing and demolition of spaces dedicated to social and cultural work that operated outside the framework established by the official policies, although it was a known fact that these facilities provided the adequate circumstances for the emergence of new forms of creativity. Like the case of the above-mentioned spaces Les Naus, or the Atelier de l'Art de Vivre in Raval, activities such as *Reclaim the Streets* and some of the most audacious proposals in the performing arts in those years. Other cases were the Submarino del Poblenou, Hamsa in Sants, Banana Factory in Born, the circus school La Makabra or the workshops for artists and craftsmen in Can Ricart. Part of our response to this adverse circumstance consisted in documenting some of these processes, participating actively in some cases, and extending the *OpenFridays* meetings for more than four years; something pushed us to go out on the streets to par-

ticipate in the dissemination of these dynamics in an environment which was becoming increasingly public.

In the joint occasion of the conferences we organized in Sant Bartomeu del Grau and the third edition of *Fadaiat* that was to take place in Barcelona, we designed and built, between April and May 2006, the first *Domo* structure: a geodesic dome as devised by Fuller. We were interested in its cheap resources, its nature of open source architecture and the possibility to assemble without complicated techniques or equipment, making it possible to adjust it to different environments, even for very short periods of time. The idea was to provide a portable space, adapted to the kind of initiatives we were working on for some time. Between 2006 and 2008, we installed it in different environments; from public art festivals to hacker meetings, in which almost always the assembly of the domo as well as the activities taking place in it were carried out in collaboration with the promoters of each event.



El Domo in the Diamant square, GRAC! festival 2006



Wikiplaza in Place de La Bastille, Paris

In late 2008, after a joint experience in TCS-Extremadura, an installation in front of the Nuclear Power Plant of Valdecaballeros, in the Badajos province, Hackitectura invited us to combine the *Domo* with a proposal developed two years earlier for the Plaza de las Libertades in Sevilla, the *Wikiplaza*. The *Wikiplaza* was installed for the first time in Place de la Bastille in Paris in May 2009, where it stayed for two weeks and created feverish activity around it, focused around the idea of a contemporary public space mediated by information technologies. This was a new version of the *Domo*, bigger and standing on a modular base designed for the occasion. Combining the physical device with the technological equipment was like offering hardware with its own operating system -open source, of course- to be used by local agents interested in sharing their work or simply as a point of connection and reflection for the contemporary user of the city.

### Collective Architectures Network

As we have seen with some of the examples shown so far in the presentation, during this decade we have witnessed the emergence of some basic citizen practices oriented towards criticism and transformation of urban areas, which often inherently entail a certain distributed micro-management of what is public or at least collective. There practices ranged from different reactions against the deployment of policies regulating the use of public space to proposals of occupation and reuse of abandoned plots and buildings as facilities; from various initiatives related to housing rights to approaches with an environmental basis; all of them related to the massive use of communication tools based on the Internet, connecting innovative move-

ments in the fields of arts, economics, technology and even science. The common thread between these initiatives is their questioning of the management of intellectual property -an aspect that is far more important than it might seem at a first glance- by creating blueprints of knowledge and an immensely potent dissemination.

To recap, we could say that on paper and in the official discourse there is much talk about the rise of the creative class, creative capital, prosumers, and all that kind of attractive concepts. However, most often the true generating and propositional initiatives are denied recognition. Unfortunately many *best practices* do not get to mature for various reasons that may range from financial problems to indifference or resistance from public administration, ignoring the obvious fact that any experimental initiative needs a space in which to be carried out.

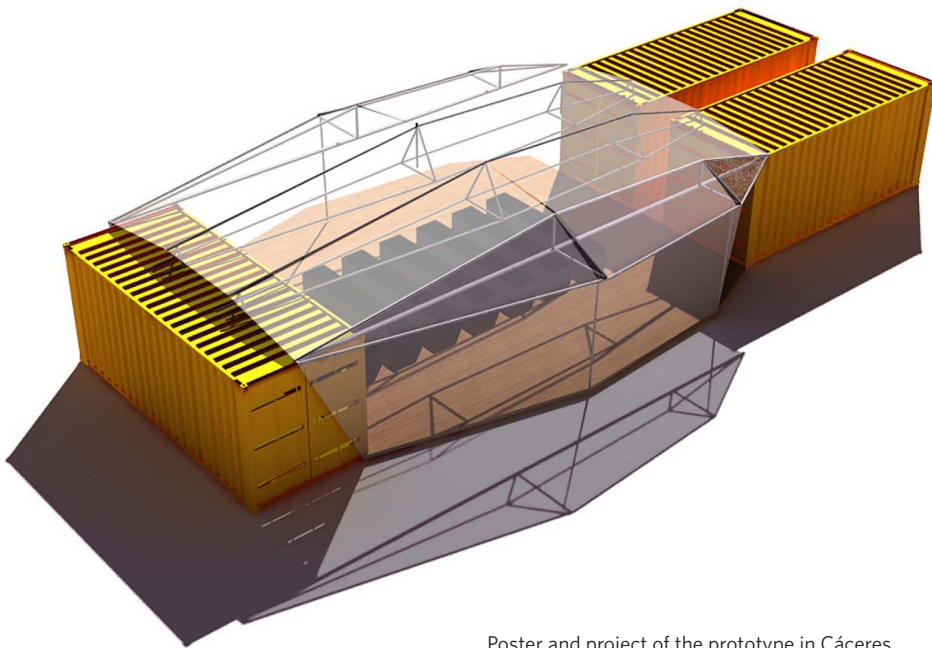
It is in this context that we propose the Collective Architectures initiative that is defined as a network of people and collectives interested in the participatory construction of the urban environment. This network provides the framework for the collaboration in different types of projects and initiatives. This framework takes shape mainly under three forms: through communication systems, collaborative projects and meetings. <http://arquitecturascolectivas.net>

The first meeting of the network took place in Cordoba in 2007. More than twelve collectives from the fields of architecture, cultural management, art, technology, education, urban activism and ecology participated in this meeting, where Santiago Cirugeda presented a proposal for recycling container-housings. The idea was to find a solution to the need for space of some of the groups while rehearsing strategies of

**TALLER**  
 PARA EL DISEÑO Y UNAS  
 PROPUESTAS DE USO  
 PARA EQUIPAR  
 UN ESPACIO PÚBLICO

CÁCERES, OCTUBRE-NOVIEMBRE 2009

A CARGO DE STRADDLE3 Y RECETAS URBANAS  
 UNA PROPUESTA DEL 5º CONGRESO DE CREATIVIDAD E INNOVACIÓN



Poster and project of the prototype in Cáceres



The Cáceres prototype in function



Panoramic view of th space base Nautarkia



Park-a-part, Arbúcies, Girona

occupation and urban recycling. This opportunity was used to establish or strengthen relationships of complicity, communication or collaboration within a network.

From then on, the network has been changing and consolidating through various collaborations and meetings. Since the last meeting, held at the Pasajes bay in July 2010, the network expanded to include more than fifty collectives. Fourteen workshops were organized; they focused, among other themes, on participatory urbanism, urban gardens, technological tools for collaboration, recycling of buildings, renewable energies, digital production, cultural management. The network has provided us with a platform through which we have developed a considerable number of projects, among which are various projects that combine the recycling of material with collaborative work between several collectives, as in the case of *Nautarkia*, an independent living unit (PELI and Straddle3) or a prototype of mobile equipment for the public spaces in Cáceres (Straddle3, Recetas Urbanas and ASILO).

**El Nodo, a collaborative project in Mexico**

*El Nodo* is an example of an elaborate recent project that was made possible thanks to the existence of the network and that has many of its defining characteristics (multi-disciplinary collaboration, participation, civil advocacy, recycling...).

*El Nodo* is a cultural production center that acts as a mediating element between disintegrated, disconnected or marginalized neighborhoods in the city of Saltillo, in the Coahuila state of Mexico. The project defines itself as a participatory center, open to the

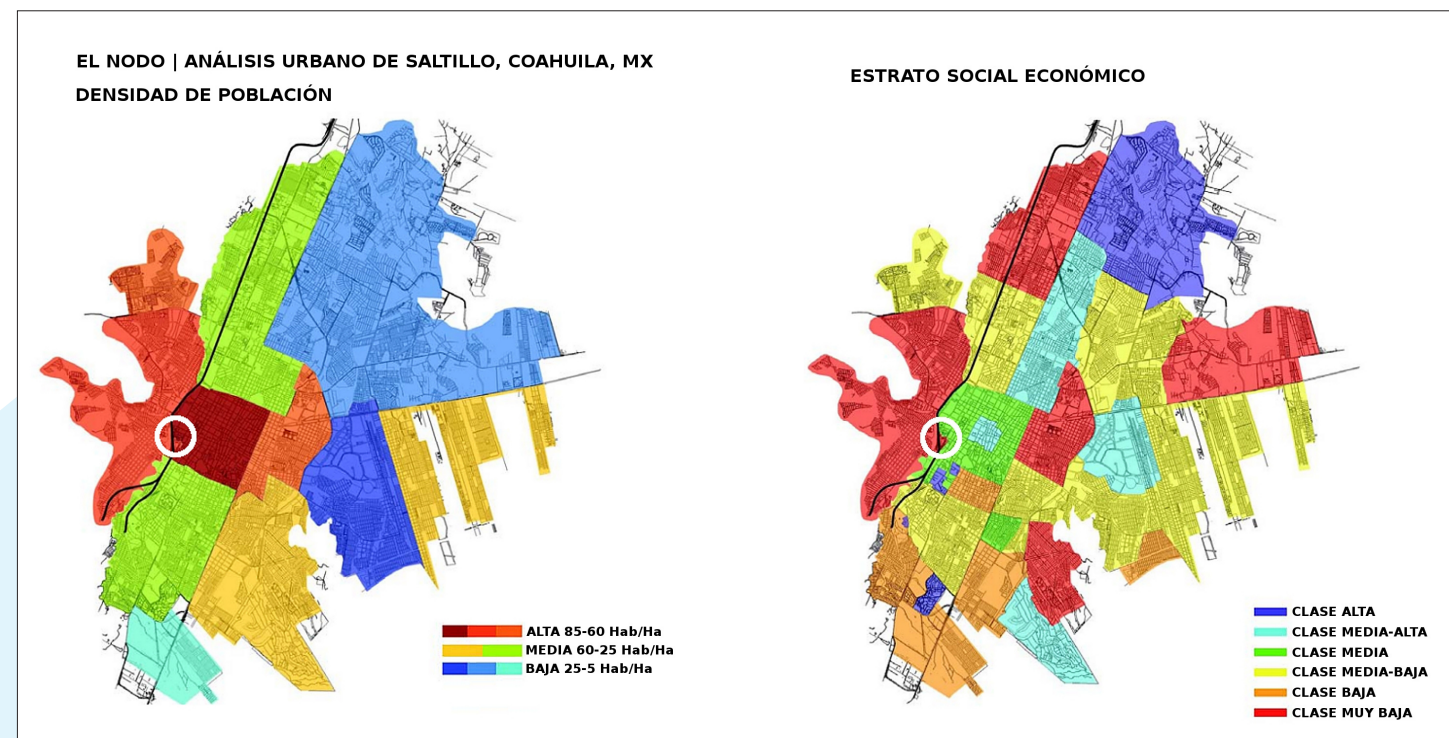
proposals of citizens, and therefore different from the traditional institutional cultural centers. Part of the preliminary research for the project consisted in carrying out a demographic analysis that shows a considerable difference between social standings and population densities in the various colonies that form the city. The railway line that represents a tremendous gap was the starting point for finding a space for this project.

The center aims to be an integrating element, capable of boosting the cultural life of the surrounding neighborhoods and the city, and to promote permeability among the residents in the different neighborhoods. It aims to bring together and support people that have similar projects, nationally and internationally, promoting the work as a network. Individuals and groups will be the protagonists of the cultural creation and production of the center, which will be more than just an exhibition space: it will be a production space in which the concerns of the neighbors and involved citizens will shape the program, encouraging feelings of belonging and civic pride. Thus, each development phase and task during the construction of the center is carried out as a workshop for the residents. In this way, the know-how about city, architecture, cultural management, etc. used for the creation of the center stays in the city and its neighborhoods and the subsequent development of projects linked to the center or other urban realities of Saltillo.

The initiative was originally launched by the local collective Inpublixpace, directed by Fernando Carrera and Fernanda Zetina who looked for the support of other professionals such as Eduardo Vásquez, ideo-



El Nodo, recycling a disused railway area



Demographic analysis of Saltillo

logue of Faro de Oriente in Mexico City, and Luca Stasi, Italian architect with many years of experience with the Recetas Urbanas in Seville, who, in turn, sought the support of La Matraka Cultural (Sevilla), Straddle3, the urban planner Marnuel Rodríguez and several individuals and collectives that have been progressively joining the project. The logical sequence with which

the support network and team of this complex project were established is very interesting.

In addition to the financial support for the project and with the help of the government –especially the Ministry of Social Action of the federal government (SEDESOL) – the Kansas City Southern of Mexico (KCM) handed us over the unused railway station.



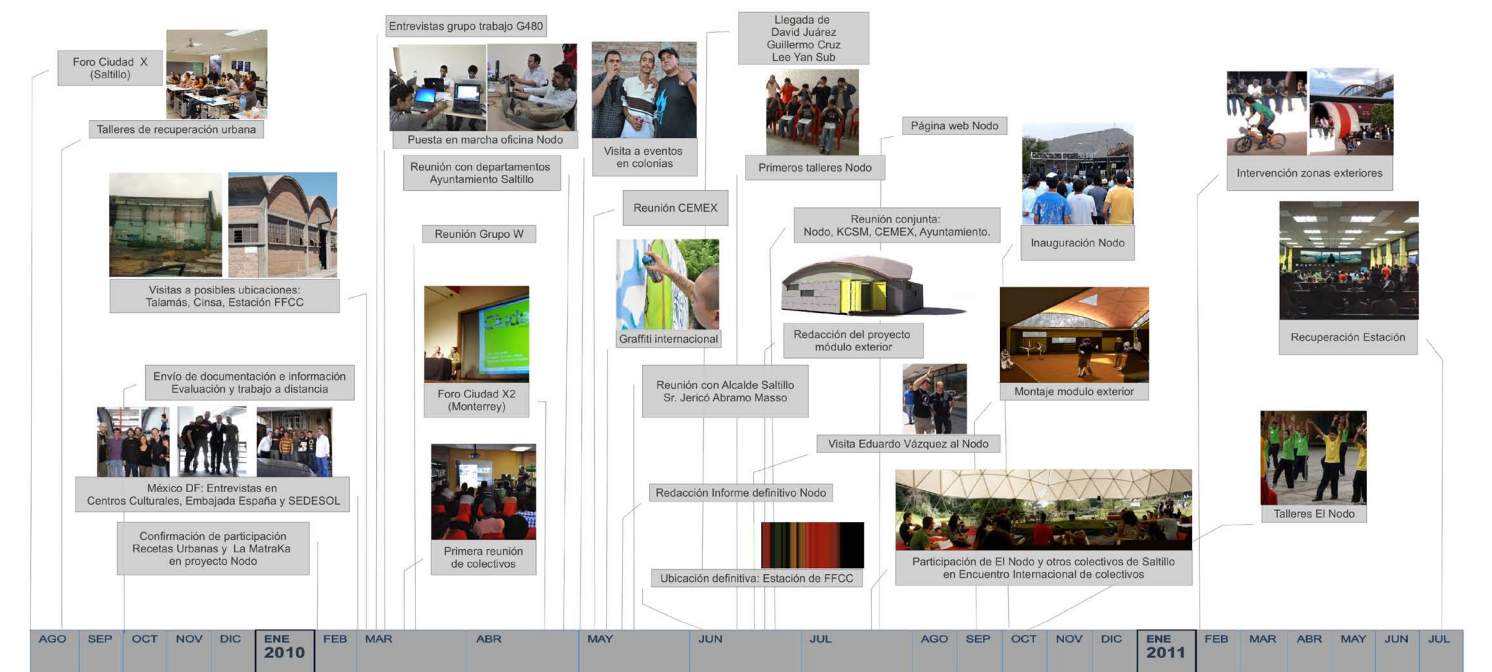
El Nodo, constructed and in operation since 2010

Moreover, the Cemex cement company gave us the small center that produced concrete elements and was part of the complex, as well as containers and railroad cars to be recycled.

A team of experts from various collectives and volunteers of schools of architecture, art and design from Saltillo and Monterrey are developing the project. The project that was written in June 2010, after locating the site of the center in the disused KCM station, consisted of a series of perspectives, an amended plan, diagrams of support networks and short, medium and long term budgets. This helped in getting the rights to use the abandoned building of the station and the financial support of SEDESOL. The first stage of the

project, Célula 0, which consists of a polyvalent space made by recycled elements was to be inaugurated before the end of 2010. Subsequently, we will work on the outdoor facilities and gardens, the museum of urban art and skatepark, whose construction is tied to the cement production center provided by Cemex. The third phase, which can be done in parallel, involves the rehabilitation and adaptation of the station building. It is essential for the proper development of the project that each of these phases is designed, managed and produced during workshops open to the people of the neighborhoods, whether they are organized as collectives or not.

Chart of El Nodo



**RACHEL ANDERSON** is in charge of the interaction programme of Artangel. She was previously a director of the Education and Outreach department of the South London gallery, where she established a programme of collaboration between artists and the local community. Before this, she directed the Queensbridge Youth project in Hackney, where she developed the Queensbridge Community Arts Partnership and the Childrens' Fund Local Providers Network. Anderson was a Fine Arts graduate at the Kent Institute of Art and Design in Canterbury in 2011, and is currently a practising artist. [<http://www.artangel.org.uk>]

**MIQUEL BARDAGIL** He is an art critic and a freelance exhibition curator. He has curated several exhibitions such as Territoris de Fricció (Vic, 2010); Mirant des de Fora (Fundació Suñol, MACBA, Arts Santa Mònica, etc., Barcelona, 2009-10; Astúries 2010); Quaderns de viatge (Mataró, Barcelona, 2008); La resta no és silenci (Can Golferichs, Barcelona, Maig LOOP Off-08); Beautiful People (et le Blessure Secrète) (CRAC Alsace, Altkirch, France, 2007; Fries Museum, Leeuwarden, Holland, 2007; Centre d'Art La Panera, Lleida, 2008; Praga i Calais); Bis a Bis (Fort Pienc, LOOP Off-07). He has published *Iniciació al vocabulari de l'art* (Barcelona, 1990), *La pintura gòtica catalana. El retaule de la Doma* (La Garriga, 1992) and *Llegit, per tant, viscut* (Barcelona, 2003, with J. Cano). He has also organised the book *Escultures* (Granollers, 2002). He has written for numerous catalogues and publications. He was a founder member and vice-president of H.AAC (1991-2002), and president (2002-04), as well as being a committee member until the present day. He was programme assessor at Sala H de Vic (2001-05). He received the ACCA Art Criticism Initiatives prize in 2009 for the exhibition *Mirant des de Fora*.

**PILAR BONET** is an historian and art critic. Professor in Contemporary Art and Design at the University of Barcelona, and at Ramon Llull University. She curated various exhibitions of historic research, as well as many other dedicated to contemporary artists (Carlos Paoza, Eugènia Balcells, Perejaume, Concha Jerez, Francesc Abad i Rogelio López Cuenca). She completed exhibition projects using the IVAM or MACBA collections, and collaborated many times with Catalan museums. She participates in a variety of magazines and takes seminars in art criticism and contemporary productions, always with special attention to the so-

cial and political questions in art. She is a member of the directive council of Can Xalant production centre in Mataró, and of the ACM in contemporary culture.

**TOROLAB-RAÚL CÁRDENAS** was founded in 1995 by Raúl Cárdenas Osuna in Tijuana, California, Mexico. Torolab is a workshop/laboratory of contextual studies which identifies situations or phenomena of interest. The result of this investigation has improved the quality of life of people. Projects are completed according to their capabilities and with the collaboration of other artists and experts in particular fields of study and investigation. Until now, they have dealt with themes such as their current investigation into the identity of the frontier region, housing and safety in the construction of community and survival. Their areas of interest are as wide and as varied as life-styles and contexts. [<http://www.torolab.org>]

**DEMOCRACIA** is an artistic collective constituted in Madrid by Iván López i Pablo España. Notable exhibitions in which Democracia has participated, include: *Idensitat Manresa* (2010); *Evento*, Bordeus, France (2009); *X Havana Biennial* (2009); *Taipei Biennial* (2008); the 10th Istanbul Biennial, and the 3rd Gothenberg Biennial. Democracia are editing the magazine *Nolens Volens* and they curated (*No Futuro*, Madrid *Abierto Abierto 2008* i *Creador de Dueños*). They are former founders and member of the art group *El Perro* (1989-2006). [<http://www.democracia.com.es>]

**NICOLÁS DUMIT ESTÉVEZ** is an interdisciplinary artist who has worked for a decade in performance and in public art, with particular emphasis on interventions and experiments in art within everyday life. He is interested in direct interaction with the audience, and he formalises his work through photography, sound recording, objects, drawings, disguises, videos and publications. He is currently working on two projects bringing art and life together: *Borderless*, presented by Art Matters with the support of the Ford Foundation, JP Morgan Chase and South West Airlines; the second project, *Born Again: A Lebanese-Dominican Dominican-York is born again* in the South Bronx, developed by Longwood Arts Project and the Bronx Council on the Arts. [<http://www.pleasetomeetyou.org>]

**STRADDLE3 - DAVID JUÁREZ LATIMER-KNOWLES** is an architect, founder member of Straddle3, a collective dedicated to architecture and communication.

Using this vehicle, he has completed many projects on the subjects of building, public space, digital public domain and participative city planning. Notable among his works include the housing in the Rambla del Raval, a prize-winning project at the UIA congress, or more recently, housing constructed from skips and other recycled materials; referring to their interventions in public space in 2006 he started the project *Domo*, a collapsible geodesic structure which, in collaboration with the Sevillian group *Hackitectura*, was converted into the *Wikiplaza* prototypes. Recently, he has created more portable structures. some in collaboration with the *Recetas Urbanas* studio. [<http://straddle3.net>]

**FADHILA MAMAR** is the director of SKOR, an institution founded in 1999 in Amsterdam which organises projects in the spheres of contemporary art and the city's sociopolitical space. Fulya Erdemci has directed SKOR since 2008; before that, she was the director of the Istanbul International Biennial (1994 - 2000). She directed *Proje4L*, the Contemporary Art Museum of Istanbul (2003 - 2004). Between 2004 and 2005 she worked as the temporary exhibitions' curator at Istanbul's Modern Art Museum. She was curator of the Istanbul section at the São Paulo Biennial (2002) and a member of the curators' team at the 2nd Moscow Contemporary Art Biennial. She has curated various public art exhibitions. [<http://www.skor.nl>]

**JOSEP-MARIA MARTÍN** is an artist. His projects centre upon creating, through art, new intervention strategies in certain consolidated structures of present society, but which, not for this fact, are free of cracks/fissures. Subjectively and reflexively, he questions and criticises the reality of the subject of his work. His works place a emphasis on the idea of process, research, participation, involvement and negotiation, by which the agents identified in each project are converted into generators of a common, real project. He is a lecturer at Pole Arts Action, HEAD (Haute École d'Art et de Design, Geneva University of Art and Design), Switzerland, and educational supervisor at l'École Supérieure des Beux Arts in Perpignon, France. [<http://www.josep-mariamartin.com>]

**RAMON PARRAMON** is an artist, educator and project supervisor. Director of ACVic Centre d'Arts Contemporànies (2010). Director and founder of *Idensitat* (1999), a collective project which serves as a vehicle for his practise as an artist. He was director of the Master's

degree in Design, Art and Public Space, Elisava-UPF (2000-2010). He curated various exhibitions such as Artesans, Construccions creatives de l'espai social (La Capella, Barcelona) Catalitzadors (Arts Santa Mònica, Barcelona), Ciutats Intervingudes (La Capella, Barcelona), Mapejar, Gràfiques, Mètriques i Polítiques de l'Espai (ACVIC). He has participated in and organised various seminars, workshops and forums of debate regarding art and social space. HGe has edited various publications such as Catalitzadors (Arts Santa Mònica / EUMO Editorial), Accions Reversibles. Art, Educació i Territori (EUMO Editorial / ACVIC, 2010); Local / Visitant. Art i creació contemporània en l'espai social (Idensitat, 2010); Art, experiències i territoris en procés (Idensitat, 2008). His career has developed with a clear interest in multidisciplinary projects, and the functions art may exercise in specific sociopolitical contexts. [<http://idensitat.net>]

**LAIA SOLÉ** is a visual artist who develops projects in specific contexts, with the collaboration of on-site residents and users, as well as artists, architects and anthropologists. She is interested in mechanisms which link individuals to places and communities; she researches the expressions and negotiations in a designated space, and intervenes by way of actions which expose and alter existent dynamics. She has worked principally in public space – neighbourhood communities, sports clubs and hospital centres – in the creation of publications, videos and installations and in the organisation of actions in Barcelona, Madrid, Rome, Jerusalem, Belgrade and Pristina, among other places. With the project Balkan Suit she has received a City of Olot Visual Arts grant, and, with Homelessing in Europe, the Generations projects grant from the Caja Madrid.

**SIMON SHEIKH** is a critic, arts curator and editor of the OE critical readers series, published by b\_books, Berlín. Presently, he is editing his doctoral thesis on the subject of political imaginaries in the construction of exhibitions, at the University of Lund. He was the coordinator of the critical studies programme at Malmö Art Academy, Sweden (2002-2009). He was director at Overgaden, Institute for Contemporary Art, in Copenhagen (1999-2002), member of the GLOBE project group (1993-2000), curator at NIFCA in Helsinki, Finland (2003-2004). As curator, he participated in exhibitions such as Capital (It Fails Us Now) at UKS, Oslo (2005), and Kunstihoone, Tallinn (2006); Circa

Berlin, Nikolaj Centre of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen (2005). He contributes regularly to the magazines Afterall, AnArchitectur, Springerin and Text zur Kunst. Among other essays, he has published In place of the public sphere?, b\_books, Berlín (2005), and Capital (It Fails Us Now), b\_books, Berlín (2006).

**VIRGINIA VILLAPLANA** is an artist, writer and associate lecturer in Communications Sciences at Universitat de València. Doctor in Fine Arts. Notable works include; El instante de la memoria (OffLimits/Mncars, Madrid), SoftFiction (Consonni, Bilbao), Diario de sueños Intermitentes (Musac, León), Narrativas de la transición española (Montevideo), Poéticas de la resistencia (Visor, València), En una corta unidad del tiempo (Liquidación Total, MediaLab Prado, Madrid), Working Documents (Centre de la Imatge, Barcelona) i Amazonia. The law of Capital (Slovenia). She is the author of the books, El instante de la memoria: a documentary novel, Zonas de intensidades: four filmed sequences about memory and sex, Cinema infinit: a book of essays about stories, digital memories and production of knowledge, 24 contratiempos and coeditor of Cárcel de amor. [<http://www.virginia villaplana.com>]

**CRACKING THE SYSTEM**  
**Art and Citizenship open source in public realm**

Direction of the publication:  
**Ramon Parramon**

Coordination:  
**Maite Palomo**

Assistance coordination:  
**Elisabet Wenceslao**

Design:  
**Eumogràfic**

Translation and correction of texts:  
**Alex Benzie, Joan Bonmatí, Maral Mikirditsian, Nati Palomo and Anna Recasens**

Edited by:

**Eumogràfic**  
C. Perot Rocaguinarda, 17  
08500 Vic  
Tel. +34 938 894 877  
[www.eumografic.com](http://www.eumografic.com)

**ACVic Centre d'Arts Contemporànies**  
C. Sant Francesc, 1  
08500 Vic  
Tel. +34 938 853 704  
[www.acvic.org](http://www.acvic.org) / [info@acvic.org](mailto:info@acvic.org)

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ISBN:  
D.L.:

**QUAM 2010**  
**Cracking the system. Art and Citizenship open source in public realm**

Direction: **Ramon Parramon**  
Coordination: **Maite Palomo**  
Support of the coordination and website archive: **Bruna Dinarès and Elisabet Wenceslao**  
Technical assistance: **Carles Arumí and Ferran Castrillo**  
Photographic and video documentation: **control [z] visual, Ferran Castrillo and Pep Herrero**  
Graphic design: **Eumogràfic**

Participants of QUAM 2010:  
**Rachel Anderson / Pilar Bonet / Torolab-Raúl Cárdenas Democracia / Nicolás Dumit Estévez / Fulya Erdemci Straddle3 - David Juárez Latimer-Knowles / Fadhila Mammam / Josep-Maria Martín / Simon Sheikh / Laia Solé / Ramon Parramon / Virginia Villaplana**

**QUAM 2010** is an activity of **ACVic Centre d'Arts Contemporànies** the framework of the **UVic Universitat d'Estiu de Vic**.

**ACVic Centre d'Arts Contemporànies** is the result of the collaboration among the **Ajuntament de Vic, Departament de Cultura of the Generalitat de Catalunya** and **H. Associació per a les Arts Contemporànies**.

**With the collaboration:**  
Fundació privada Elisava Escola Universitària  
Escola d'Art i Superior de Disseny de Vic

