

# The Turns of the Global

Anna Maria Guasch





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Adolf Florensa, s/n

08028 Barcelona

Tel.: 934 035 430

Fax: 934 035 531

comercial.edicions@ub.edu

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## INTRODUCTION. THE CONCEPT OF TURN<sup>1</sup>

As Irit Rogoff argues in the essay “Turning”,<sup>2</sup> one of the questions to ask when we use the term “turn” concerns the etymological origin of this word and, especially, its use at a time marked by the need to rewrite new narratives in the light of the challenges inherent in global art. After assuming that the -isms, styles, and artistic tendencies of modernism and the creative conditions (such as appropriationism, simulationism, and activism) of post-modernism have been superseded, the recourse to the “turn” seeks new urgencies, such as that of attending to approaches that are more contextual and circular in character than philological and/or linear. What are we referring to when we speak of the turn to delimit that which particularises and differentiates the work of practitioners of the geographical, ecological, ethnographic, historical, documentary, and cosmopolitan turns? Are we talking about a reading strategy? About an interpretive model, as would be derived from the linguistic turn of the 1970s, or rather about a stratigraphic structure that could be read across multiple cultural practices? Do we wish to read one system by means of another system, in a way that one nurtures the other so that it can open us up to other forms of being? Or is it rather about a generative movement in which a new horizon emerges in the process, leaving behind the practice that was its point of departure?

The recurrence of “turn” in place of style, -ism, or tendency would ultimately respond to a clear urgency of the contemporary global world: a movement characterised by aesthetic pluralism, by the simultaneousness of various *modus operandi*, and by a great multiplicity of languages that constantly change their state, while having many features in common. And turn would also allow, that in the space of the contemporary, of here and now, a great diversity

<sup>1</sup> *The Turns of the Global* is part of the book *El arte en la era de lo global, 1989-2015* published by Alianza Editorial (Madrid, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Irit ROGOFF, “Turning”, in *e-flux* (No. 0, 2008). Available at [www.e-flux.com/journal/00/68470/turning/](http://www.e-flux.com/journal/00/68470/turning/) (consulted 6 April 2015).

of stories from all around the world that should be confronted simultaneously in an intellectual outlook that is continuous and disjunctive, essential to understanding the present as a whole.

The endless production of difference in the art world is not only the result of the cohabitation of various national identities, but is also a consequence of the way in which artists, curators, and theorists seek to present positions (the turns) within this field, turns that would overlap, intertwine, and inhabit different places, maintaining equidistant relationships with universal ideas. And this in an international art world where stylistic *linguas francas* seem to have disappeared, but which does not wish to renounce a certain formal complexity.

Together with turn, the word network is fundamental for understanding how artists contact each other, work together, take part in the same critical discussions, and do so at points of transition that are still within their decidedly individual trajectories.

# 1

## THE GEOGRAPHICAL TURN



## The new places and territories of a discursive geography

When, in 2003 within the discursive framework of the show *Geography and Politics of Mobility*, the artist and curator Ursula Biemann — known for her commitment to questions of migration, gender, and globalisation — adopted the term geography as the main *leitmotif* of the exhibition, it was clear that this had nothing to do with geography as a discipline of geophysics but with questions related to the transformative quality of places and geographies at a time in which individuals were not obliged to remain in the same place.

Ursula Biemann indicated that geographical thinking had become, through globalisation, the most fundamental and decisive instrument of analysis,<sup>1</sup> and highlighted the importance of the postmodern understanding of geography as a distinct means to organise knowledge according to the way in which the natural, the social, and the cultural are related to each other. The geographical model then functions as a theoretical platform from which to think about the social in an expanded way that includes concepts of borders, connectivity, and transgression. Geography examines the places that are not only constructed by people who live in them but by all kinds of connections and movements that cross them in a variety of scales that range from the local, private, and intimate to the public, transitional, and economic. As Biemann claims:

We notice an abundance of images of fluid, unfixed, and transitional identities in circulation at present. These increasingly recognized qualities of identity are partially a result of transgender discourses but also of cyber mobility and physical migration as well as a general increase in travelling and repeated or multiple chains of human movement. No doubt, the fast spread of information technologies and the liberalization of post-socialist countries had a definitive impact on

1 Ursula BIEMANN, “Geography and the Politics of Mobility”, in Ursula BIEMANN (ed.) *Geography and the Politics of Mobility* (exhibition catalogue), Vienna, Generali Foundation, 2003, p. 21.

the mobility of people since the early nineties. But migration has always existed and travelling people too.<sup>2</sup>

Ursula Biemann, in emphasising the importance of places, of human paths, and the traffic of signs and visual information, is but part of a lengthy genealogy of art thinkers and theorists who — since the end of the 1980s, and specifically since the emblematic date of 1989 — have opted for the cultural production of space in line with the thinking inaugurated by Edward Soja, who in *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Theory* (1989)<sup>3</sup> presented postmodern geography as a way of deconstructing the modern logic of space in which reality led to ideology. Under the influence of Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia and Henri Lefebvre's reflections in the text *La production de l'espace* (1974),<sup>4</sup> Soja formulated his theory of the "third space", a space of alterity, of confrontation, and of interbreeding, a space of union between the real and the imaginary, and of overcoming the binary logic of modernity (class, gender, race) in the search for new spaces created by difference. The space is never something given, argues Soja. It is not a closed box to be filled, but is only a phase of a mere background staging. And in all these cases, we are talking about a space that refers to a wider concept — that of spatiality, understood as a socially produced space. As Bertrand Westphal argues, it would be a "third space" of possibilities for a cultural politics of difference and identity that is seen as radically postmodern and consciously specialised from its origins.<sup>5</sup>

Spatiality is a social product, part of a second nature, an essential aspect of human life and of a description of the world. Soja considers three forms of spatial thinking: perceived space, conceived space, and lived space. If the theorists of modernity recognised only two types of space — the perceived and the conceived — Soja identifies a third aspect of spatiality in itself, an aspect that goes beyond all physical and mental construction, but which incorporates and transcends both of these. Soja uses the concept of third space to define a radical way of thinking that proposes an alternative to all binary conceptions of space. The third space would be created under the effects of a changing cul-

2 Ursula BIEMANN, "Geography and the Politics of Mobility", p. 21.

3 Edward W. SOJA, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, London, Verso, 1989.

4 Henri LEFEBVRE, *La Production de l'espace*, Paris, Anthropos, 1974.

5 Bertrand WESTPHAL, "Edward Soja ou la poétique du décentrement", in *Centquatrevue* (Paris, 2008, p. 10).

ture and would be a place of simultaneousness and intertwining, always seeking a socio-political transformation.

Against the first space — the perceived space that consists of concrete spatial forms, things which can be empirically mapped — and in relation to the second space — the conceived space, a space constructed in mental or cognitive forms and which would ultimately be a representation of power and ideology — the third space (which Soja also calls lived space) consists of social and spatial practices and incorporates the world of experiences, emotions, and political choices. It is a space that is directly lived, the space of inhabitants and users, and at the same time it simultaneously contains other spaces, both real and imaginary. The lived space is superimposed on the physical space, making a symbolic use of its objects, and it tends to be expressed in systems of non-verbal symbols and signs.<sup>6</sup>

The art historian Thomas DaCosta Kauffmann, in his reflections in *Toward a Geography of Art* (2004), also contrasts the chronological way and the historical methodology, emphasising the spatial aspects of analysis not only of events and objects — including art and architecture — but also of their antecedents, their causes, and their effects, among which human artefacts are considered to be a significant element. Kaufmann refers to a human geography that takes into account the impact of the physical environment on human beings and which leads us irrevocably to cultural geography, dedicated to studying the expansion of human cultures around the globe and the object of the new discipline of the geography of art.

## Geography and visual culture

In the context of these times of ethnic cleansing, forced migration, disputed borders, and nations in crisis, a question imposes itself: How to project questions of place and identity, of belonging and exclusion, in the field of visual culture? And in this vein, the theorist and art historian Irit Rogoff has made a fundamental contribution in the text *Terra Infirma. Geography's Visual Culture*. Rogoff defines her work as a subject in formation that does not deal with either identity politics or works of art that refer to the iconography of geography. Neither is it a study of cultural geography or an exercise in creating geographical metaphors around the fields of cultural production. On the contra-

6 Edward W. SOJA, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Cambridge (Mass.), Blackwell, 1996, pp. 130-131.

ry, what Rogoff seeks to do is firstly to trace links between the dislocation of individuals and the disruption of collective narratives and languages of signification in the field of vision and, secondly, to carry out an epistemological investigation that privileges the emergent rhetoric of the processes of deterritorialisation under the common arena of geography.<sup>7</sup>

And, Rogoff asks in the introduction, why the recourse to geography? Geography, like the discourses of space and spatialisation, makes possible a critical discourse that affects a set of material conditions in the lives of subjects linked to their psychic subjectivities. “Homeless” geography allows the redefinition of aspects of place far from the specific needs of belonging and not belonging that are determined by the state:

I was drawn to try to work in the arena of geography because it seemed possible to locate within its revised understanding an alternative set of relations between subjects and places — an alternative set of relations in which it is not scientific knowledge or the national categories of state which determine both belonging and unbelonging, but rather linked sets of political insights, memories, subjectivities, projections of fantasmatic desires and great long chains of sliding signifiers.<sup>8</sup>

Rogoff understands geography as an epistemic category, just like gender or race — categories that share a commitment to the concept of belonging, which work around the dichotomies of the self and the other, and around other strategies of emplacement and displacement. Geography would be a system of classification, as location, a place for collective, national, cultural, linguistic, and topographic stories. But Rogoff’s challenge is not limited to this new theorisation of geography, as she also seeks to extrapolate it to the field of visual culture, going beyond the 1970s project of the social history of art which, for the first time, allowed that notions of class, gender, race, and language penetrate the analysis of visual representation, and which initiated the process of the de-hierarchisation of images within culture.

Hence geography, following the work of two generations of postmodern geographers and theorists of the urban space (Henri Lefebvre, Rosalynn Deutsche, Dennis Wood, Cornelia Vismann, and Victor Burgin), became an epistemological structure whose practices not only concerned economic and national relationships but also identity issues and, in particular, various signs

7 Irit ROGOFF, *Terra Infirma: Geography’s Visual Culture*, London and New York, Routledge, 2000, pp. 1-2.

8 Irit ROGOFF, *Terra Infirma: Geography’s Visual Culture*, p. 7.

and systems of a geographic nature. Signs and systems such as borders, bodies, luggage, and cartography, which Rogoff ties to certain aspects of contemporary visual cultural production, from traditional forms of painting to photography, video, and installation — within the wide framework of conceptual art — with examples such as Hans Haacke, Joshua Glotman, Mona Hatoum, Joshua Neustein, Guillermo Gómez Peña, Ana Mendieta, and Michal Rovner.

Following this discursive line, one should highlight the reflections of Nato Thompson, as well as those of the artist and geographer Trevor Paglen, in the text *Experimental Geography. Radical Approaches to Landscape, Cartography, and Urbanism*.<sup>9</sup> After noting the connections between the new geography and Henri Lefebvre's concept of the "production of space", according to which humans create the world that surrounds them and, in turn, are created by this same world that encloses them,<sup>10</sup> Paglen asks how to link these new axioms of geography with cultural production and also with the old discipline of the history of art. After recognising the interdisciplinary character of contemporary geography, he goes on to claim that while the axioms of the new geography can guide all kinds of practice and research, nonetheless a geographical approach to art performs a clear revision of the disciplines of history and criticism, as they have traditionally been conceived. A geographer interested in art would start from very different premises from those of an art critic:

To speak very generally, the conceptual framework organizing much art history and criticism is one of 'reading culture', where questions and problems of representation (and their consequences) are of primary concern. In the traditional model, the critic's task is to describe, elaborate upon, explain, interpret, evaluate, and critique pre-given cultural works. In a certain sense, the art critic's role is to act as a discerning consumer of culture.<sup>11</sup>

9 Nato THOMSON, "In Two Directions: Geography as Art, Art as Geography", and Trevor PAGLEN, "Experimental Geography: From Cultural Production to the Production of Space", included in the exhibition catalogue *Experimental Geography. Radical Approaches to Landscape, Cartography, and Urbanism*. The touring show was exhibited at the Richard E. Peelert Art Center, DePau University, Greencastle, Indiana, 19 September–12 December 2009; at the Rochester Art Center, Rochester, Minnesota, 7 February–18 April 2009; at the Albuquerque Museum, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 28 June–20 September 2009, and at the Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, Maine, 21 February–30 May 2010.

10 According to Trevor Paglen, the human condition would be characterised by a feedback loop between human activity and our material environment. From this, it is deduced that space, more than being a container for human activities, would be produced actively precisely through human activity itself. See Trevor PAGLEN, "Experimental Geography: From Cultural Production to the Production of Space", p. 39.

11 Trevor PAGLEN, "Experimental Geography: From Cultural Production to the Production of Space", p. 29.

On the contrary, a good geographer can use the analytical axioms that belong to the discipline to focus on the problem of art from a different point of view. Instead of asking, “What is art?” or “Is this art successful?”, a good geographer would pose questions along the lines of “What is this space that is called art like?” or “What are the historical, economic, cultural, and discursive conjunctions that make up something called ‘art’ and, on the other hand, produce a space that is colloquially known as the ‘world of art’?” From this, one can deduce that the geographical question is not so much interested in *why* art is as in *what* art is. And thus, rather than approaching art from the privileged point of view of consumption, a critical geographer can reformat the question of art in terms of a spatial practice.<sup>12</sup>

Conceived in terms of spatial practice, art is not only interested in objects but also in the ways in which distinct actions participate in the production of space. And in this case geography not only constitutes a method of research but also necessarily involves the production of the research space. Geographers can analyse the production of space, but through this study they are also producing space. Geographers not only study geography: they produce geographies in what the author identifies as “experimental geography.”

## The geographical exhibitions

One of the first exhibitions that echoed this new epistemic dimension of geography — and its implicit commitment to questions of belonging around the dichotomies of self and other and the strategies of emplacement and displacement — was *GNS. Global Navigation System* (2003),<sup>13</sup> in which Nicolas Bourriaud, using the anonymous 1929 map *Le Monde au Temps des surréalistes*,<sup>14</sup> proposed how in a deterritorialised world remodelled by technology, geography competes not only with hard science but also with artists who approach it from a perspective that is both poetic and critical. Contrary to the “world-surface” of land art, today’s art describes a “planet-plateau” with a succession of stages and decorations in which to live, with multiple networks in which we

<sup>12</sup> Trevor PAGLEN, “Experimental Geography: From Cultural Production to the Production of Space”, p. 30.

<sup>13</sup> *GNS. Global Navigation System* (exhibition catalogue), Palais de Tokyo Site de Création Contemporaine, Paris, Cercle d’Art, 2003.

<sup>14</sup> This concerns the map published in the special edition of the Belgian magazine *Variétés*, “Le Surréalisme en 1929” (June 1929).

move, circuits through which we displace ourselves and, above all, economic, social, and political formations that delineate human territories.

Hence Bourriaud's choice of a set of artists such as Mark Lombardi, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Franz Ackermann, Wim Delvoye, Thomas Hirschhorn, Pierre Huygue, Pierre Joseph, and Bureau d'études — among others — who make use of maps, plans, satellite images, and social studies with the obsession of describing the planet and using its spaces with the help of investigations, staging, and stories. This would bring Bourriaud to describe a good part of contemporary art as an “off-shore” zone: neither totally integrated into society nor taking on the role of a neutral observer. A zone which defines itself by keeping distances, alternating committed expedition in the heart of the real and separation in the comfort that is procured by extra-territoriality. As Bourriaud argues: “Art is a map of the word which jumps from one scale to another, passing indifferently from 1/1,000,000 to 1/1; the distance is the same, but the focus and the mode of capture change, in the image and likeness of photography via satellite.”<sup>15</sup>

And as Irit Rogoff<sup>16</sup> has noted, another of the works that from the curatorial field tackled the visual dimension of the new postmodern geography was the previously mentioned show *Geography and the Politics of Mobility*, in which Ursula Biemann linked the new geography with questions of mobility, both human and that related to electronic networks within the well-defined zone of “fortress Europe”. To find answers to the question about what role should be performed by art in maintaining relationships between Western Europe and other minority contexts both European and non-European, Biemann backed projects produced purposely by international artists such as Bureau d'études (France), Frontera Sur RRVTT (Spain and Switzerland), Makrolab (Slovenia), Multiplicity (Italy), and Raqs Media Collective (India), that adopted different forms of collaboration and temporary alliances with the aim of conferring meaning on inhabited spaces.

## Mobility in the curatorial framework

The way was already prepared for some of the exhibitions with a spatial and geographical focus that were held during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Mi-

<sup>15</sup> Nicolas BOURRIAUD, “Topocritique: l'art contemporain et l'investigation géographique”, in *GNS*, p. II.

<sup>16</sup> Irit ROGOFF, *Terra Infirmis: Geography's Visual Culture*, pp. 1-2.

gration, mobility, dialogue between the local and the global (in most cases under the South-South axis) were some of the subjects favoured by curators, whether of alternative artistic spaces and the peripheral biennials or of thematic exhibitions of an institutional character in museums, both large and small. Under the so-called “mobility turn”,<sup>17</sup> which seeks to reconcile — in the context that Joaquín Barriendos describes as the “geoaesthetic turn”<sup>18</sup> — the politics of mobility with contemporary subjectivity, uniting the mobility of subjects with the components of contemporary cognitive capitalism, it would be necessary to cite a series of curatorial projects such as *Crossings* (1999), *Migration* (2003), *Migrating Identity* (2004), *On Mobility* (2004), and *Movimiento doble. Estéticas migratorias* (2007), for which the physical dimension of mobility made sense only when united to its symbolic dimension with the aim of proceeding to a deconstruction of the classic postcolonial map. What is interesting here would be the “social physics” of mobility,<sup>19</sup> in the sense of how displacements (those derived both from exile or diaspora and from migration or nomadism) transform the social context in which they are inscribed, thus changing the network of meanings that are the fruit of the interweaving of the movement of bodies and the cultural representation of space.

One of the first exhibitions that investigated the cartography resulting from transcultural relationships offered by the international art system was *Crossings* (1998),<sup>20</sup> which put forward —with artists such as Cai Guo-Qiang, Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Carlos Capelán, Jimmie Durham, Mona Hatoum, Alfredo Jaar, Ilya Kabakov, Kcho, Yinka Shonibare, Jana Sterbak, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Xu Bing, and Jin-me Yoon — questions about exile, hybrid identities, and cultural dislocation in cities as distant and distinct from each

17 Peter ADEY and Paul BEVAN, “Between the physical and the virtual: Connected mobility?”, in John URRY and Mimi SELLER (eds.), *Mobile Technologies of the City*, London, Routledge, 2006, pp. 44-60.

18 As Joaquín Barriendos argues: “Echoing the anthropological turn and its impact on the area of cultural tourism, new technologies, the new ethnology of urban imaginaries and the consequences of that which is known as the critique of the social production of space, the politics of mobility have provided a profound decentring regarding the way in which it is possible to conceive subjectivity geographically today.” See Joaquín BARRIENDOS, “El arte global y las políticas de la movilidad: Desplazamientos (trans)culturales en el sistema internacional del arte contemporáneo”, *Liminar: Estudios Sociales y Humanísticos* (Vol. 5, no. 1, January-June 2007, p. 161). See also, by the same author, “Geoesthetic Hierarchies: Geography, Geopolitics, Global Art, and Coloniality”, in James ELKINS, Zhivka VALIAVICHARSKA, and Alice KIM (eds.), *Art and Globalization*, University Park (Pennsylvania), Penn State University Press, 2010, pp. 245-250.

19 Joaquín BARRIENDOS, “El arte global y las políticas de la movilidad: Desplazamientos (trans)culturales en el sistema internacional del arte contemporáneo”, p. 163.

20 *Crossings* (exhibition catalogue), Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada, 7 August-1 November 1998, p. 12.

other as Toronto, Vancouver, Paris, London, Sydney, Johannesburg, New York, and Antwerp. Taking as a leitmotif Edward Said's reflection that modern Western culture is largely the work of exiles, émigrés, and refugees, the show's curator Diana Nemiroff indicated that today's metropolis has become not only a place for the crossing of global communications but also for a disturbing meeting of cultures, religions, and languages — ultimately a place of local conflicts. Hence the latent ambivalence in the discourses of displacement that is shown in the formula of "here and there" in place of "here or there", characterised by identifications, non-identities, and acts of relationship more than pre-established forms. This tradition is a network of partially connected stories, a constantly displaced and reinvented time/space of crossings.<sup>21</sup>

As an example, the work of the Chilean artist Alfredo Jaar who, in *Waiting* (1998) — drawing on photographic images of a cinematographic scale of Hutu refugees fleeing reprisals after the massacre of Tutsis in 1994 and attempting to cross one of the main bridges between Rwanda and Zaire (Congo) — tackled the theme of dispossession and the unequal economic and power relationships in the First World and the "Third Worlds". Starting out from Edward Said's idea of considering the exile as a "counterpoint" and a "discontinuous state of being", other artists in the show such as Ilya Kabakov in *Two Windows* (1998), a labyrinth with a single entrance and exit that obliged the spectator to perform a double turn to leave the space, played with two realities — one present, another past — represented by two windows, between which the spectator makes a constant journey to and from, as occurs in exile, an exile which in Kabakov's case moves between the present and a nostalgic past that leads him to claim that the worst thing that Soviet man created was life without hope, life without a window.<sup>22</sup>

A new exhibition, *Migration*, held in the Liechtenstein Kunstmuseum (2003)<sup>23</sup> —with the presence of artists of several generations, from Joseph Beuys, George Brecht, Mario Merz, Pier Paolo Calzolari, and Robert Filliou of the 1970s to activists of the 1990s such as Félix González-Torres, Mona Hatoum, and Kim Sooja — put the accent on works in which home exists only in the memory and the world is experienced as a state of movement, in a per-

21 Nemiroff cites James Clifford's text "Diasporas", in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, Harvard University Press, 1997, p. 268. See Diana NEMIROFF, "Crossings", in *Crossings* (exhibition catalogue), p. 12.

22 "Ilya Kabakov", in Amei WALLACH, *Ilya Kabakov: The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away*, New York, Abrams, 1996, p. 13.

23 *Migration* (exhibition catalogue), Liechtenstein, Kunstmuseum, 29 June–2 November 2003.

manent state of flux in which all that seems stable is only temporarily stable: “When you travel, you are aware that you are only a short-term guest, and that time is limited” seemed to be the slogan of the show.

Inspired by the reflections of Fredric Jameson,<sup>24</sup> who suggested that the geographical and phenomenological impact of minorities and migrants within the West could be crucial in the conception of the transnational character of contemporary culture, the exhibition *Migrating Identity: Transmission/Reconstruction* (2004),<sup>25</sup> curated by Renée Ridgway, brought together eighteen artists under a common denominator: that the communities of the whole world are living life and experiencing connections with themselves only within the reflection of the other. And it is thus how artists such as Astrid Proll, Renée Kool, Rainer Ganahl, Federico D’Orazio, Tiong Ang, and Joseph Beuys put forward various forms of migration in their works — psychological, social, sociological, physical — with discourses that concerned identity, the political body, gender, and territory: elements that were understood as nodes of transmission in a true palimpsest. In the exhibition catalogue, Renée Ridgway explains that the exhibition is an entity in itself, a structure that reveals a diversity of cultural territories, different aesthetic norms, dissimilar attempts to follow suit, redefining new orders and maps through cultures. She says that as the observer perceives the exhibition as a whole, everything converges as an act of cultural necessity.<sup>26</sup>

From another point of view, the exhibition *On Mobility* (2004) served as a script for a “mobile and migrant” show, which started in Amsterdam in 2004 and — after visiting Berlin, Budapest, and Vilnius (capital of Lithuania) — returned to the Dutch city in 2006. An exhibition with co-curators in each of its places of origin who enriched it with contributions of each specific place, so that the final show underwent a radical transformation in relation to its predecessors. The work of each artist — as can be seen in Alicia Framis’s installation *234 New Dutch Flags*, of 2005, in which she mixed the yellow and red colours of the Spanish flag with the red, white, and blue of the Dutch flag and then used these to design pennants that related to mixed nationality — was nurtured by its own culture to end up transcending borders and limits. One should understand in a similar way the video installation of the Chinese artist

24 Fredric Jameson, *The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, London, Blackwell, 2000.

25 *Migrating Identity: Transmission/Reconstruction* (exhibition catalogue), Amsterdam, Seb Foundation, 21 May–20 June 2004.

26 Renée RIDGWAY, “Don’t leave me this way, Community & Marginality”, in *Migrating Identity: Transmission/Reconstruction*, p. 11.

Tiong Ang, *Cut Close Up on Matriarchy* (2005), which shows the disastrous effect of sexual tourism on various women of the Mosuo tribe, one of the last matriarchal societies in the world, which had remained isolated until the arrival of tourism from urban China.

The architect Yona Friedman (as recognised in one of the catalogue texts written by the curator Luca Cerizza) had anticipated in his “Mobile Architecture” manifesto of 1958-1962 the idea of a Spatial City, a possible way to organise future forms of inhabiting the earth. The mobility proposed in his projects did not refer to the means of building but to the use made of the dwelling in each different context. Friedman sought a maximum flexibility through the design of an enormous superstructure over the city. The future inhabitants of these structures would be free to construct their compartments within this network. The example of Friedman was the starting point for the work of Marjetica Potrč and her defence of “spontaneous architecture” in the most precarious regions of the planet. Other artists in the show tackled questions of global mobility from a wide range of approaches — from the critical analysis of reductionist representations of mobility offered by the communications media (the case of the collective Multiplicity, which used the documentary format to present a portrait of the hybrid architecture of villas and theme parks built in Morocco by Moroccans who lived in Europe) to the presentation of personal stories, between the poetic and the utopian, such as those which dealt with the local and regional aspects of mobility (as in Miklós Erhardt or in Leopold Kessler and his 2006 video *Import*). In fact, the works in the show, such as Javier Téllez’s video installation *The Greatest Show on Earth* (2006), demonstrated a familiarity with the international audiovisual dialect of the imaginary and with the common language of newspapers, television, magazines, and even school books.

## The concept of latitude as journey and translation

Another example of taking the model of a world without centre as poetics and as the epistemology of the exhibition discourse is the first exhibition organised by a mainstream institution, the Walker Art Center of Minneapolis, Minnesota. We refer to the show *How Latitudes Become Forms: Art in a Global Age* (2003),<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *How Latitudes Become Forms: Art in a Global Age* (exhibition catalogue), Minneapolis, Walker Art Center, February-May 2003, Turin, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo per l’Arte, June-September 2003, and Houston, Texas, Contemporary Arts Museum, July-September 2004.

which openly raised the question of the global versus the local in artistic and cultural debates and which questioned the authority of the museum. All this a remake of the title with which Harald Szeemann revolutionised the world of exhibitions in 1969 in the Swiss city of Bern in the show *When Attitudes Become Form: Live in Your Head*, which can be considered a real foundational moment when the curator became an “author” and gathered together the work of a group of artists involved in the notion of process (a multiformal, unrigid form of art) and work made according to the place (site-specific).

Philippe Vergne, the curator of *How Latitudes Become Forms*, decided to invite a multidisciplinary committee of advisors from seven different locations or latitudes to reconsider a series of premises in the light of a global discussion. These seven latitudes were Brazil, China, Japan, India, Turkey, South Africa, and the United States, with the premise that each place should be understood as an example that, metaphorically, could suggest other territories of the world. Each latitude became a case study for the analysis of current artistic forms and practices. And if Harald Szeemann’s exhibition put the emphasis on attitudes derived from work processes and work made according to the place, now the importance lay in notions of proximity and locality, in the outline of an aesthetic of the small gesture, in the growing importance of everyday practices, and in the subversive potential of art.<sup>28</sup> And this was dominated by notions of “thirdness” (not so much about the Third World as the Third Cinema, a mode of film theory which explored to what extent cultural practices based on political and cultural emancipation could engage with aesthetic practices) and of “in-betweenness” (neither cooked nor raw, neither black nor white, neither man nor woman, neither centre nor periphery). These notions are central to the artistic practices explored in this exhibition, as recognised by Homi Bhabha, for whom thirdness is a key element in the enunciation and conceptualisation of a new international culture based on hybridity. All the weight of the meaning of culture would fall — in Bhabha’s opinion — on translation and negation, as well as in the “in-between” and “beyond” spaces. And it is thus that Bhabha locates culture in what he calls a third space, a space that collapses new cultural practices and historical narratives.<sup>29</sup>

What was important was not so much the process and the attitude as the latitude and the place in which artists projected their locality within globality. Hence a good number of the artists in the exhibition coming from different

28 Philippe VERGNE, “Globalization from the Rear: ‘Would You Care to Dance, Mr. Malevich?’”, in *How Latitudes Become Forms: Art in a Global Age*, p. 22.

29 Homi K. BHABHA, *The Location of Culture*, London and New York, Routledge, 1994.

latitudes (artists of Japan, Turkey, Los Angeles, Brazil, and India were equally important) inscribed themselves in the global scene without renouncing local contexts and the production of locality, or strategies of criticism, resistance, and transgression against the hegemonic power of Empire. Some of the questions raised in *How Latitudes Become Forms* were: How not to react to the pressure of the new power of globalisation in what we would call new forms of political activism in the face of the new problems generated by global capitalism? How can art for other latitudes be made and shown?<sup>30</sup> This is the somewhat utopian character that Paulo Herkenhoff confers on the show in his essay in the catalogue:

The creation of significant art is no longer the monopoly of one country or one city [...]. Nor is art the property of a center, a place, a people, a class, a gender, an ethnic group, a notion of history, a style, a taste, a state, the West, a longitude, or a latitude.<sup>31</sup>

We thus face, as Paulo Herkenhoff argues, a new articulation of the differences that should supplant the Eurocentric history of art. It is in this sense that ideas formulated by Jameson in his essay “End of Art or End of History?”<sup>32</sup> take on significance, when one asks how various “ends of art” could be coordinated philosophically or theoretically with this new closing of the borders of capitalism.

And under this philosophy, it makes sense — both literal and metaphorical — to resort to cartography. More than neutralising differences, as happened with the international exhibitions or the postcolonial biennials, the show sought to break the practice of strategically promoting exhibitions of non-Western artists from the point of view of cultural voyeurism. To avoid internationalism understood aesthetically as a postmodern lingua franca implied, in the words of Walker Art Center director Kathy Halbreich, taking on ideas of postcolonial thinkers such as identity, locality, hybridisation, and cultural specificity. And it is thus that the organisers imagined the word latitude as a *double entendre* that expressed the freedom with which it is possible both

<sup>30</sup> Erin M. SICKLER, “Liminal Latitudes: Ritualizing the Global and the Local in Contemporary Art”, in *Anamesa: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, “The Borders Issue” (Vol. 4, no. 2, Autumn 2006, pp. 40–54).

<sup>31</sup> Paulo HERKENHOFF, “Learning and Dislearning to be Global: Questions at 44°53’ N, 93°13’ W and 22°54’24’ S, 43°10’21’ W”, in *How Latitudes Become Forms: Art in a Global Age*, p. 129.

<sup>32</sup> Fredric JAMESON, “End of Art or End of History?”, in *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983–1998*, London and New York, Verso, 1998, p. 92.

to define the internal functioning of the exhibition and to describe a geographical space.<sup>33</sup>

Regarding the selection of artists, two coming from one of the latitudes present in the show — Brazil — stand out: Merepe (Marcos Reis Peixoto, an artist from Bahía, “emissary of the legacy of Oiticica”) and Franklin Cassaro, who took up the tenets formulated by Helio Oiticica in his 1966 *Position and Program*, which outlined the principles of neoconcretism, a Brazilian movement that transgressed the artistic autonomy of Eurocentric thinking through the practice of appropriation. Mocking the heritage of its minimalist form through a process called anthropophagy, Oiticica’s creations were linked to political struggles for equality in Brazil in the 1970s.

Philippe Vergne’s defence of aesthetic strategies of the matte as opposed to the brilliant, low technology as opposed to high technology, and production of low value could be applied to many of the works in the show. For example, the artist Yin Xiuzhen, in her series of old suitcases (*Portable City-Beijing, Portable City-Berlin, Portable City-Shanghai*, 2002), presented the urban space as a metaphor for collecting. Inside the suitcases, the artist includes dioramas of cities reconstructed by means of the residents’ used clothing. As Erin M. Sickler claims, in place of interrupting global rhetoric with the vernacular, Xiuzhen’s work could be read as a simulacrum of a local space that was inviting neither analysis nor aesthetic appreciation. The objects collected by this artist are rather touristic souvenirs.<sup>34</sup>

The works of the Japanese artist Tabaimo (*Japanese Zebra Crossing*, 1999) fit in with these considerations. A set of profusely coloured and naïve vignettes lead to a deconstruction of the systems of Japanese life. The criticism is based on the manipulation of Japanese stereotypes (public baths, men’s wages) and is directed towards nationalism and its relationship to a period of economic crisis and, in general, to a crisis in values that alter the hierarchical construction of Japanese society. One finds a similar dose of tension in the works of the Turk Gülsün Karamustafa and the Indian Sheela Gowda. In her installation *Mystic Transport* (1992), Gülsün Karamustafa poeticises the problem of deterritorialisation in considering urbanisation and recent capitalist developments. These baskets with coloured clothes allude to nomadic populations. And these coloured sheets always allude to the presence of bodies. Sheela Gowda, in *And Tell Him of My Pain* (1998-2001), counterpoises the ar-

33 Kathy HALBREICH, “Foreword”, in *How Latitudes Become Forms: Art in a Global Age*, p. 4.

34 Erin M. SICKLER, “Liminal Latitudes: Ritualizing the Global and the Local in Contemporary Art”, in *Anamesa. An Interdisciplinary Journal*, The Borders Issue, vol. 4, no. 2, Autumn, 2006, p. 47.

chitecture of the white cube with this drawn line of string that no longer has anything to do with a gesture belonging to abstraction (action painting) but which is an anthropomorphised gesture (created with traditional materials and tools — utensils — that allude to Indian customs). The demand of information and realism is revealed in the film of the Chinese artist Wang Jianwei *Living Elsewhere* (1999-2000), which documents a failed urbanistic development in the suburbs of Beijing.

The paradox of this new post-Western global order is that many artists try more than ever to reinvent or establish their difference within these runaway processes of homogenisation. Another behaviour that derives from the emergence of locality in a global world is the appropriation of ideas related to pedagogy, sociology, anthropology, urbanism, and the humanities in general. This is a very interesting phenomenon that impedes artists from seeing themselves as creators of objects for contemplation and rather as instigators or processes in which the audience is the active protagonist.<sup>35</sup> This would explain the need of artists to relocate practices beyond the dominant model, towards an aesthetic investment of the modest and the fragile, along with the notion of the day-to-day and the quotidian. We can apply this idea of modesty to the works of artists such as the South African Usha Seejarim (*Sequence City*, 2002) and the Chinese Song Dong (*Water Diary*, 1995) formalising from the periphery an attitude of opposition to works of high value. Working from the simple can be considered as a double affirmation: aesthetic, but also political in a way that is neither monumental nor not demonstrative. This could be defined as the production of meaning and content from behind (from the queue), from a position of a revitalised underground, beyond the consolidated mainstream.

The works of Zon Ito (*Scrap Works of Scum*, 1999) are very paradigmatic in this respect. These are artist's books and the most interesting thing about them are the pages: all made manually and handcrafted in the search for a non-innocent innocence and a deliberate adolescent attitude. The drive to slow down things in place of launching them into a better future is only one aspect of this wide spectrum of strategies of low production value which seek to reconsider critical practices no longer from beyond, above, or within — but through the back door.

35 Philippe VERGNE, "Globalisation from the Rear: 'Would You Care to Dance, Mr. Malevich?'" , p. 25.

## From geoaesthetics to geopolitics

Beyond the geoaesthetic dimension that links cultural diversity to the global circuits of art exhibition, one should cite initiatives closer to Immanuel Wallerstein's reflections on geopolitics and geoculture,<sup>36</sup> coinciding with the end of an era of the hegemony of the United States in the "world-system", and which, in Jameson's words, seek to construct new cartographies of knowledge or new cognitive maps in the framework of a new spatial analysis of culture that allows territories to establish new forms of power and interaction between cultural identities.<sup>37</sup> This is what, on the other hand, Joaquín Barriendos defines as the geographical turn, which means for aesthetics the same as the spatial turn in regard to global art, coinciding with the end of the hegemony of the Western aesthetic ("*westhétique*") in favour of a new transregional relocation of contemporary art.<sup>38</sup>

One could situate under these parameters the show *Uneven Geographies* (2010),<sup>39</sup> curated by Alex Farquharson and T. J. Demos, which sought to illustrate the ways through which contemporary art responded to the politics of a neoliberal globalisation revealing its points of crisis and of human costs and proposing imaginative possibilities for a world — or, better, for a geography — dominated by social justice. A world which shows in parallel an unimaginable wealth and an unimaginable poverty now that the prosperity of the world's richest three men is equivalent to that of 600 million poor people. The centres of power in the new global economic order are multiple and challenging: misery cannot be identified in a single despot — an imperialist monarch or a totalitarian dictator. In their place is the anonymous headless market, going beyond any condition of the nation-state, which determines people's fate.<sup>40</sup>

36 Immanuel WALLERSTEIN, *Geopolitics and Geoculture: Essays on the Changing World-System*, Cambridge (Mass.), Cambridge University Press, 1991.

37 Fredric JAMESON, "Cognitive Mapping", in Cary NELSON and Lawrence GROSSBERG (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1988, pp. 347–360.

38 See Joaquín BARRIENDOS, "Un cosmopolitisme esthétique? De l'effet Magiciens et d'autres antinomies de l'hospitalité artistique globale", in Kantuta QUIRÓS and Aliocha IMHOFF (eds.), *Géoesthétique*, Paris, Éditions B42, 2014, pp. 157–163.

39 *Uneven Geographies* (exhibition catalogue), Nottingham, Nottingham Contemporary, 8 May–4 July 2010.

40 Alex FARQUHARSON, "Foreword", in *Uneven Geographies*, p. 3.

Coinciding with the symposium *The Geopolitical Turn: Art and the Context of Globalisation*,<sup>41</sup> organised on the occasion of the show, T.J. Demos asked: “What can contemporary art tell us about the geography of capitalism under globalisation? A capitalism that has divided the global North from the global South producing and maintaining relationships of social, economic, and political inequality between nations of the planet offering us a reality that contradicts the triumphalist version of globalisation that celebrates a new era of markets, of social equity, and democratic inclusion — which Thomas Friedman calls the flat world of a horizontal and egalitarian consensus”.<sup>42</sup>

Nothing is flat, horizontal, or egalitarian, argues Demos, but rather it would be determined by the word “uneven”, coined by the geographer Neil Smith in his 1990 text *Uneven Development* and by fellow geographer David Harvey who, in *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Toward a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development* (2008),<sup>43</sup> formulated an approach to globalisation from the lens of geography in relation to the spatial conditions of advanced capitalism, according to which contradictory tendencies of capital come together which simultaneously promote egalitarianism (the harmonisation of levels and contradictions of production) and differentiation (the accumulation and centralisation of wealth). And if, as Smith observes, this unequal development of capitalism was first observed in the nineteenth century by Marx, who reflected on the “new and international division of labour”, it is certain that the current situation of the global economy favours, following Harvey, accumulation by dispossession, which hits the nail on the head regarding the relationship between systems of health and poverty and which leads to what Naomi Klein calls disaster capitalism, generated through the reforms of the post-Soviet republics.

This, then, would be the theoretical framework that would group most of the works of the artists brought together in *Uneven Geographies*, who recognised the growing dominance of differentiation over and above egalitarianism at the heart of global capitalism. Works that — as in the cases of those by Ursula Biemann, Yto Barrada, and George Osodi — mapped the spaces of excep-

41 Among the activities organised around the exhibition, the congress *The Geopolitical Turn: Art and the Contest of Globalization*, held on 8 May 2010 stands out. Sara Motta, Alfredo Cramerotti, Mark Fisher, the exhibition’s artists and its curators participated in this event.

42 Thomas L. FRIEDMAN, *The World is Flat: The Globalized World in the Twenty-first Century*, London, Penguin Books, 2006.

43 See Neil SMITH, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space*, New York, Blackwell, 1991, and David HARVEY, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development*, London, Verso, 2006.

tion that exist beyond legality, at the same time as showing the dangerous journey around the militarised borders of the North and South, and portraying the impoverished circumstances which persist in the shadow of the energy industries. It is about artists who seek to invent new forms of representation that situate us, in a critical and creative way, in relation to the unequal developments of globalisation in a line similar to that proposed by Jameson who, in *The Geopolitical Aesthetic*, shows that the advances of advanced capitalism — global financial landscape, network communications technologies, transnational legal mechanisms, and advertising converted into spectacle — render insufficient the languages of analysis and description, that is to say inadequate for thinking of a system so cast that it cannot be encompassed by classic theories of perception with which human beings normally orientate themselves.<sup>44</sup>

Hence the need, according to Jameson, to resort to “cognitive mapping” that would make possible a representation of the parts of the system within a vast and actually non-representable totality, which is none other than the set of social structures as a whole. Hence the urgency of the artists gathered by Demos to make this crisis of representation visible, which brought Yang Zhenzhong to materialise the politics and reforms of neoliberalism to make them visible and invite a critical consideration of them. From numerous perspectives that ranged from the sociological to the emotional and from the documentary to the performative, the works of the exhibition explore forms of inequality related to neoliberal globalisation, while revealing, as Demos puts it, the power of creative and at the same time oppositional energies that direct themselves against its economic-political dictates and open themselves up to other modes of globalisation. This is the case of the artist Bruno Serralongue and his series of photographs, documenting the World Social Forum 2004 in Mumbai, which brought together 2,500 lectures, seminars, and workshops under the slogan “Our world is not for sale”, at the same time as, in his notable desire to avoid the spectacular, seeking to capture the spirit of many movements of the Global South, the other face of the economic elitism of the World Economic Forum of Davos. A real “globalisation from below” which presents a decentred and transnational movement of movements committed to social justice, economic equality, and economic sustainability.<sup>45</sup>

44 Fredric JAMESON, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995, p. 50.

45 See T. J. DEMOS, “Another World, and Another... Notes on *Uneven Geographies*”, in *Uneven Geographies*, p. 18.

With new contributions from Yto Barrada, *Life full of Holes — The Strait Project* (1998-2004), George Osodi's photographic series *Oil Rich Niger Delta* (2003-2007), and Steve McQueen's work *Gravesend* (2007), the exhibition defined, according to T.J. Demos, the current conditions of neoliberal globalisation, revealing sub-points of crisis and human cost, while proposing new imaginative possibilities for a world — and, to be more precise, for a geography — of social justice, experimental creativity, and political inclusion. All this leads us to the conclusion that more than seeing the time of globalisation as an inevitable result of modernity, it is presented as a set of narratives in conflict with distinct political and economic readings. Thus, the exhibition invites us to defamiliarise ourselves and to repoliticise the term globalisation from renewed relationships between art and politics that contemplate a just and egalitarian future.<sup>46</sup>

Taking as a starting point the reordering of global relationships after the Second World War — “the European year zero” — a new exhibition, *After Year Zero: Geographies of Collaboration since 1945*,<sup>47</sup> addressed the phenomenon of the historical global turning point of decolonisation and the attempts to challenge and transform the framing conditions of the era of colonial modernity with a special reference to the first Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung (Indonesia), held in 1955 with the aim of proposing a new model of collaboration of the “Global South” under the flag of an anticolonial modernity. And it is thus how both the curatorial discourses of the exhibition and the works of the artists — four of which were new productions — sought to give a response to a wide range of questions generated in the aftermath of the history of colonial modernity and decolonisation after 1945. For example, Kader Attia, in his work *Repair in Five Acts* (2013), investigated the cultural practices of mutual appropriation and representation between Africa and Europe and, specifically, the interconnections of colonial history and Christian missionaries, centred on the vast collection of African art and religious objects in the Vatican which remain hidden from public view.

To respond to the question of how the pan-African movement positioned itself and initiated a period of changes after 1900, the work of The Otolith Group, *In the Year of the Quiet Sun* (2013), reflects this same horizon of expectations of decolonisation, taking Ghana after its independence from the British Empire in 1957 as an example. For his part, John Akomfrah, one of the co-founders of the Audio Film Collective, in the video installation *The Unfinished*

46 T. J. DEMOS, “Another World, and Another... Notes on *Uneven Geographies*”, p. 19.

47 *After Year Zero: Geographies of Collaboration since 1945* (exhibition catalogue), Berlin, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 19 September–25 November 2013.

*Conversation* (2012), took up the question of the role played by colonial history and fascism in liberation movements, taking as a starting point the relationship of the language of the liberation movements and the political realities of the old African colonies. Conclusion: identity is neither an essence nor a being, but a development in which individual subjectivities are formed in a space both fictitious and real. The filmmakers Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi, who since the 1970s have worked with archive film material as a source of their research into the processes of colonialism and decolonisation, in the installation *Imperium* (2013), a chronical of Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia, shed new light and meaning on the historical events through the appearance of spectres that disinter forgotten and often shameful historical crimes.

## Artistic contributions

The change of a historical discourse to one that is geographical and spatial, including global geography and technology under the umbrella of migration and globalisation has, since the 1990s, nurtured numerous artistic practices that work in which we might call the symbolic dimension of mobility, which understands migration and identity politics as the critical faces of some of the cultural consequences of globalisation. Practices that ultimately, more than being interested in places in their physical or landscape dimension (at the opposite pole to land art), are carried out for the relationship of bodies with these places or territories, and for all kinds of social representations that these displacements bring with them, generating a new type of power relationship between places (understood as discursive or identity-based places and as transnational public spheres) and subjectivities.

## Transregional delocalisation

Among the artists that took up this new transregional delocalisation we would highlight for her pioneering character the already mentioned **Ursula Biemann** (Zurich, 1955), who uses video as a strategy or critical methodology to carry out her studies of borders and extraterritorial zones, an analysis that wanders through the interstices of art, anthropology, and ethnography. The common denominator of all her works, according to T.J. Demos, is “the rigorous and varied approach to documenting real conditions in transitional social-economic

areas, and a complex relation to representation that exceeds the protocols of traditional documentary conventions”.<sup>48</sup>

In the video essay *Performing the Border* (1999), Biemann proposed the border of the United States with Mexico as a geographical area constituted by a discursive and material space that was expressed through the representation and management of gender relations, the alienation of the lives of women who work in beauty parlours, and sexual violence in the public sphere. Of the four chapters into which the video is divided (“The Plant”, “The Settlement”, “Sex Work”, and “The Killings”), as Angela Dimitrakaki suggests, it is the final chapter that is the most important, inasmuch as it identifies a clear form of criminality present throughout the video: “the abductions, rapes, and murders (the notorious ‘femicides’) of women in the desert by the border, lending the latter a creepier form of bio-political identity.”<sup>49</sup>

In a new work, the synchronised video *Contained Mobility* (2004), Biemann analyses the conditions that established the changes in the regulation of cross-border displacements in Europe after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, with a particular focus on the situation of “spatiotemporal suspension of trans-local existences”.<sup>50</sup> Centring itself on the sophistication and the methods developed to control the flow of people and goods on one side, and on the other side on those individuals who sought asylum as the only means of avoiding restrictions on mobility, Biemann identified mobility and containment as two constitutive elements of an oxymoron, the paradox of a system that is connected but segregated that, as Uta Staiger suggests, ultimately equates to a contrast between the rights of citizens and human rights.<sup>51</sup>

The project *Sahara Chronicle* (2006-2009) is a collection of twelve short videos that bear witness to the sub-Saharan exodus towards Europe, taking account both of the dynamics of mobility and the politics of containment that overlap in this geographical area. Biemann seeks to represent the complexity of abstract economic relationships through the experience of migration, “link[ing]

48 T. J. DEMOS, “Sahara Chronicle: Video’s Migrant Geography”, in *Ursula Biemann: Mission Reports: Artistic Practice in the Field: Video Works 1998-2008* (exhibition catalogue), Umeå, Bildmuseet, Umeå Universitet and Arnolfini, 25 November 2007–20 January 2008, p. 179.

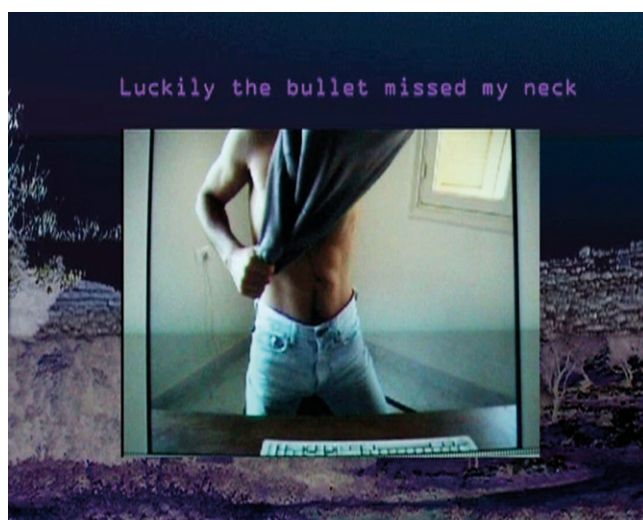
49 Angela DIMITRAKAKI, “Materialist Feminism for the Twenty-First Century: The Video-Essays of Ursula Biemann”, in *Ursula Biemann: Mission Reports: Artistic Practice in the Field: Video Works 1998-2008*, p. 118.

50 Ursula BIEMANN, “Contained Mobility”, in *Líneas de Mira* (exhibition catalogue), Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, 2008, p. 67.

51 Uta STAIGER, “Visualizing the Citizenship Gap: EU Borders and Migration in Cultural Productions”, in *Ursula Biemann: Mission Reports: Artistic Practice in the Field: Video Works 1998-2008*, p. 142.

everyday life with colonial history, legal structures with economic facts, the politics of containment with the will toward mobility”, as T. J. Demos highlights.<sup>52</sup> Depriving the images of dramaticism, the specific focus frees the representation of the phenomenon of the criminal charge with which the communications media tends to approach the question of clandestine migration, and expresses a capacity of social organisation, an agency omitted by the hegemonic accounts, “to turn stigma into an enabling force”.<sup>53</sup>

In the video essay *X-Mission* (2008) (fig. 1), Biemann takes the Palestinian refugee camps as an object of study, exploring the various legal, symbolic, urban, historical, and mythological discourses that define the various features of these places which the artist presents as the origin of extraterritorial zones, equating them with zones of free trade, touristic centres, and border territories.<sup>54</sup> The global context of extraterritoriality in which, according to Ada Sbriccoli, the Palestinian settlements must be situated “is profoundly affected by the rationales that have been imposed since 11 September 2001 and by the extension of a stage of emergency, the implantation of strategies of control,



**Figure 1.** Ursula Biemann, *X-Mission* (2008).

<sup>52</sup> T. J. DEMOS, “Sahara Chronicle: Video’s Migrant Geography”, p. 180.

<sup>53</sup> Ursula BIEMANN, “Agadez Chronicle: Post-Colonial Politics of Space and Mobility in the Sahara”, in *The Maghreb Connection*, Barcelona, Actar, 2006, p. 67.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Ursula Biemann, in Juan Vicente ALIAGA (ed.), *Desde el Magreb al Máshreq: Diálogos artísticos y geopolíticos sobre el norte de África, Oriente Próximo y el mundo islámico*, Murcia, Cen-deac, 2012, p. 77.

and the suspension of civil rights”.<sup>55</sup> Divided into seven chapters (prologue, legal space, symbolic space, zones of exception, mythological time, industrial complex, and post-national state), the videos provides testimony of the relationships of these complex ecosystems with the diaspora, with their home country, and with other groups of Palestinians who make up this very dispersed community.

A good part of the work of **Bouchra Khalili** (Casablanca, 1975) explores the area of the Mediterranean as a territory dedicated to nomadic existence through a combination of physical and mental geography. It is in this context of work, which reflects the transnational existential state that defines transit zones and immigration routes, that the eight videos and eight photographs produced between 2008 and 2011, *The Mapping Journey* (fig. 2), are located, forming the series called *The Constellations* and whose objective is to map an alternative cartography of the Mediterranean based on eight clandestine journeys. These routes coincide with those of the artist, who travelled from Marseilles to Ramallah, from Bari to Rome, from Rome to Barcelona, and from Barcelona to Istanbul. Centred on the confrontation between the remarkable courses and the normativity of cartography, the project centres on a counter-cartography based on gesture, drawing, and speech. In carrying out this double exploration — geographical and existential — Bouchra Khalili used real political maps of the Mediterranean and asked immigrants without documentation to draw their illegal journeys directly onto them to make evi-



**Figure 2.** Bouchra Khalili, *The Mapping Journey* (2008-2011).

<sup>55</sup> Ada SBRICCOLI, “Ursula Biemann: *X-Mission*”, in Anna Maria GUASCH (ed.), *La memoria del otro* (exhibition catalogue), Santiago de Chile, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 2010, p. 53.

dent the alternative geography generated by these journeys. As pointed out by Kaelen Wilson-Goldie,<sup>56</sup> just like the phantasmal character of the protagonist of Saramago's book *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* [The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis] (1984), Khalili's characters are phantasmal: at the same time present and absent, they never appear explicitly on the screen. We know their names, we see their hands, but they exist mainly in the voice-over, narrating their stories of clandestine journeys.

Reflecting on the confrontation between geography and the remarkable journey of the minorities, these actions allowed the artist to articulate territories, narratives, languages, and the voice of the minorities "with a formal refinement and extreme simplicity" that evokes "this radical economical and cultural situation, giving us no possibility to escape."<sup>57</sup>

## Border thinking

The act of taking border thinking as a new place of production of knowledge in a direct line with the thinking of Walter Mignolo<sup>58</sup> gives life to the words of many global artists, including Chantal Akerman, Antoni Muntadas, Francis Alÿs, Alejandra Riera, Marine Hugonnier, and the collective Border Art Workshop/Taller de Arte Fronterizo, founded in 1984 as part of the Centro Cultural de la Raza in Balboa Park (San Diego, California) by Guillermo Gómez-Peña, who opposed the cartography of what he called the "new world order" with the conceptual map of the "new world border", a trans- and intercontinental border zone where no centre is perpetuated. Everything is left at the margin, which means that there no longer exists the figure of the "other". In other words, the real "others" are those who resist fusion, mixing, and dialogue between cultures.<sup>59</sup>

Francisco Jarauta in "Habitar la frontera" [Inhabiting the border] — citing Hans Enzensberger in *Die Große Wanderung* [The Great Migration] (1992), one

<sup>56</sup> Kaelen WILSON-GOLDIE, "In Focus: Bouchra Khalili", in *Frieze* (no. 143, November–December 2011, pp. 34–35). Available at [www.frieze.com/issue/article/focus-bouchra-khalili/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/focus-bouchra-khalili/) (consulted 1 March 2015).

<sup>57</sup> Elvan ZABUNYAN (translated by Salima Semmar), "Bouchra Khalili", in *Tarjama/Translation: Contemporary Art from the Middle East, Central Asia, and its Diasporas* (exhibition catalogue), New York, ArteEast, 2009, p. 74.

<sup>58</sup> Walter D. MIGNOLO, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*, Princeton (New Jersey), Princeton University Press, 2000.

<sup>59</sup> Guillermo GÓMEZ-PEÑA, "A New World Border", in Kantuta QUIRÓS and Aliocha IMHOFF (eds.), *Géosthétique*, p. 69.

of the most radical ethical meditations on current migratory movements — aims to analyse the subject of the border as a machine of rights, differences, behaviours, exclusion, and violent acts, which is deployed as soon as the process of emigration is unleashed, altering the conformable and defended fortress of well-being and identity.<sup>60</sup>

A fundamental contribution to the aesthetics of the border was that of **Chantal Akerman** (Brussels, 1950-2015), especially in the work presented at Documenta II in Kassel, *From the Other Side* (2002), which deals with the fate of Mexicans who put their lives at risk in wanting to cross the border with the United States next to the Arizona desert, and specifically between Agua Prieta and Douglas. After Akerman's reading of press reports of ranchers in Arizona who had decided to impose their own laws with complete impunity, hunting illegal immigrants with rifles on their shoulders and treating them as prisoners of war, the artist decided to place herself in the location and carry out a series of interviews with people of the Mexican border, based on the concept of fear. Akerman describes how we are faced with an installation that deals with the fear of the other, of the other's poverty, and of the possibility of contagion. Fear, without doubt, of this putrefaction. This impurity, she says, attacks the archaic idea of the integrity of the body, the earth, and the blood. And above all in the United States, with a fundamentally primitive society invented for puritans and imbued with a morality of racial discrimination and an obsessive conscientiousness with origins. According to Akerman, this corner of Arizona is a world where, with a rifle on the shoulder, possessions are defended against anyone considered to be a foreign invader who brings contamination with them.<sup>61</sup>

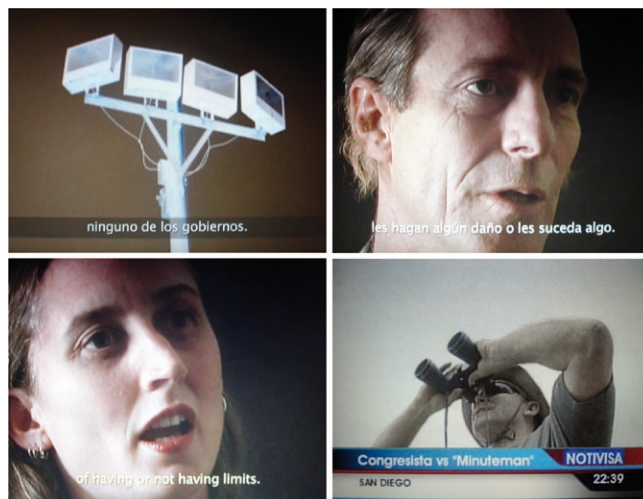
Within the project *On Translation*, **Antoni Muntadas** (Barcelona, 1942) dedicated two works to the subject of the border: *On Translation: Fear/Miedo* (2005), on the border between San Diego (United States) and Tijuana (Mexico), and *On Translation: Miedo/Jauf* (2008), on the frontier that separates Tarifa (Spain) and Tangiers (Morocco), projects that reveal that the border is something more than a physical place, which apart from the landscapes themselves, provides a pretext to document the voices and the faces which inhabit them. As Daniel López del Rincón argues, the border is analysed as a geopolitical stage, where the border reality is not only a geographical landmark but

60 Francisco JARAUTA, "Habitar la frontera", in *Entre fronteiras = Between Borders* (exhibition catalogue), Vigo, MARCO Museo de Arte Contemporánea de Vigo, 9 February–20 May 2007, p. 87.

61 Gwendolyn Audrey FOSTER, *Identity and Memory: The Films of Chantal Akerman*, Trowbridge, Flicks Books, 1999, p. 23.

also a mental construction, conditioned by factors that range from the prejudices fed by the media to the same ignorance of “the other” culture, the culture of the “other”. This fear is not only an abstract sentiment but also a place, a *locus*. Any border is proposed as a place of separation (barrier) but also as a place of transit (port) — however, the fluidity in both directions is never the same. *On Translation: Fear/Miedo* (fig. 3) reflects how, from the United States, the border is perceived as the place of entry for certain resources that form part of the economic system (such as cheap labour and the lack of official documentation of many immigrants); from Mexico, the border is lived as a way of hope for an economically better life and, at the same time, as the means of access to a situation that is socially precarious and marked by marginality; to which should be added terrorism, religion, the position of women, and a fracture that can be synthesised in the following pairs of concepts: North/South (economic aspect), West-East (cultural and religious aspect), Arab-Spanish (linguistic aspect).<sup>62</sup>

It is also interesting to note that, although both works have the same kind of televisual format, *Fear/Miedo* nonetheless implies a change of scale, almost bordering on a big production of almost an hour in length in which to Muntadas’s traditional concerns (the political, the historical, the cultural, the sociological, mechanisms of control) are added two more: that of political or critical subjectivity (showing disagreement through personal concerns) and some

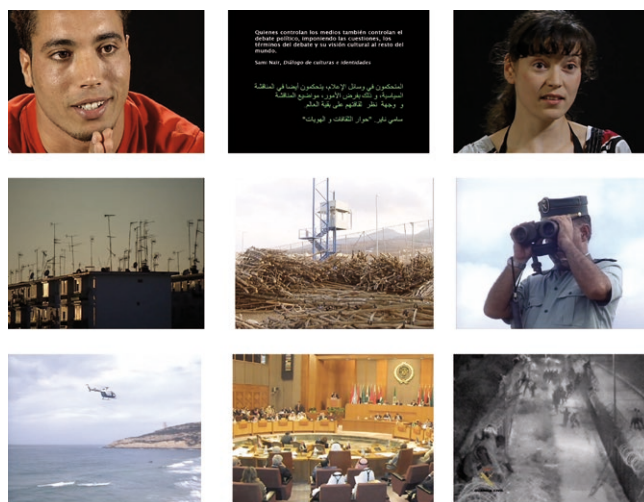


**Figure 3.** Antoni Muntadas, *On Translation: Fear/Miedo* (2005).

62 Daniel LÓPEZ DEL RINCÓN, “Antoni Muntadas: *On Translation: Miedo/Jauf—Fear/Miedo*”, in Anna Maria GUASCH (ed.), *La memoria del otro*, pp. 153–170.

concessions to the aesthetic beyond the documentary. And this is joined to a demand for the specificity of the place, which is understood both as a geographical landscape (highlighting the maritime view of the Strait of Gibraltar) and as a human landscape in which certain protagonists (citizens of Tarifa and Tangiers) tell us of their concept of fear through the constant play between private space and public space.

We are dealing, as also happens in *Miedo/Jauf* (2007) (fig. 4), of images-memoir but with a caveat: here the reproduced images tend to undermine memory in favour of immediacy, the transience of its structure, and the power of impact that it bears. The problem of the border is thus freed of its transience, even of its character of anthropological enterprise and what we see is rather an inventory of lost objects, in which are developed (observers and observed included) interpretive theories, historical sequences, and fear converted into a myth. The text of the catalogue talks to us of how, together with the tense sociopolitical and juridical situations related to immigration, drugs trafficking, exile, and rootlessness, there is also a place for the emotional.<sup>63</sup>



**Figure 4.** Antoni Muntadas, *On Translation: Miedo/Jauf* (2007).

**Francis Alÿs** (Antwerp, 1959) uses poetic and allegorical methods to approach political and social realities, such as national borders, conflict zones, and issues related to the community. In his interest in questions related to ur-

63 See also Octavi ROFES, “Translations: Facing the Wall” (pp. 210-215), and Lise OTT, “Ethics and aesthetics of a paradox” (pp. 216-224), in *Antoni Muntadas: Entre/Between* (exhibition catalogue), Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 22 November 2011–25 March 2012.

banism and his personal exploration of cities and landscape poetics, Alÿs conceives of walks that resist the subordination of the common space.<sup>64</sup> Also, in harmony with the postmodern geographer Edward Soja,<sup>65</sup> Alÿs works with spaces that can be real and imagined. Spaces can tell tales and reveal stories. Spaces can be interrupted, appropriated, and transformed through artistic and literary practice; the use and the appropriation of space are political acts.

His action-performance *The Leak* (1995) fits these parameters, consisting of marking a line with blue paint dripping from a paint can through the streets of São Paulo, where the beginning and end of the journey was an art gallery. In 1997 Alÿs took part in the biennial *InSite* (San Diego-Tijuana) with an action — *The Loop, Tijuana—San Diego* (1997) — in which he devised a far-fetched plan to move between the two exhibition stages (San Diego and Tijuana) without having to cross the US-Mexican border. The artist himself wrote in one of the exhibition's posters:

To travel from Tijuana to San Diego, without crossing the border between Mexico and the United States, I will take a route that is perpendicular to the dividing fence. Displacing myself 67° SE, then towards the NE and then again towards the SE, I will circumnavigate the Earth until reaching the starting point. The objects generated by the journey will testify to the realisation of the project, as well as leaving it free of any critical content beyond the physical displacement of the artist.

This is about an absurd response that included a map of the journey from Mexico, Central America, the Pacific Ocean, China, Russia, Canada, the United States, and Mexico once again — to draw attention to the inequalities that affect crossing the border in relation to the nationality of the citizen.

In 2004, Alÿs reactivated this action on another stage, the border between Palestine and Israel known as the Green Line, a line traced on a map with a green pencil by Moshe Dayan at the end of the war between Israel and Jordan in 1948. The act of tracing the same line with green paint is symbolic, vandalistic, political, poetic, and at the same time ephemeral. Francis Alÿs is interested in the opinion and reaction of different agents, who showed a certain bewilderment at this poetic gesture charged with political memory, stories which form part of the documentary video *The Green Line. Jerusalem* (2004) (fig. 5).

64 Carlos, BASUALDO, "Head to Toes: Francis Alÿs's Paths of Resistance", in *Artforum* (Vol. 37, no. 8, 1999, pp. 104-107).

65 Edward W. SOJA, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*.



**Figure 5.** Francis Alÿs, *The Green Line. Jerusalem* (2004). In collaboration with Julien Delvaux.

In the exhibition *Geografías del desorden* [Geographies of disorder],<sup>66</sup> **Rogelio López Cuenca** (Málaga, 1959) presented an installation with a double video projection entitled *Walls* (2006) (fig. 6): the first of the projections assembled recordings from security cameras of the fences around the city of Me-



**Figure 6.** Rogelio López Cuenca, *Walls* (2006).

<sup>66</sup> *Geografías del desorden* (exhibition catalogue), Valencia, La Nau, Universitat de Valencia, 2006.

lilla, and the second documented the border spaces of Melilla and Tijuana, together with the translation from Spanish to English of the poem “Walls” (1896) by Constantine Cavafy. A double text, a double reading that emphasises the division of the world by walls, fences, and borders which act as deterrents legitimated by agreements and treaties that, like that of Schengen, increase social and economic inequalities between the countries of the so-called First and Third Worlds.<sup>67</sup> *Historia de dos ciudades* [History of two cities] (2010) (fig. 7) produced together with Elo Vega for the exhibition *Atopía. Art i ciutat al segle XXI* (2010)<sup>68</sup> is a video essay that presents an alternative geographical map about the extraterritoriality of Western Sahara, sketched from the specific lives of individuals who have made the extraterritoriality their daily routine. It highlights the skyline between two worlds, Barcelona and the Sahara, face to face. The map of the metro on the desert, or the desert on a Jean Nouvel building which appears like an oasis in the middle of a city which acquires desert-like traces. As the artists claim:

The portrait, necessarily perishable, of this suspension makes use of our own and others’ recordings to emphasise the recurring act of being narrated by others, conceived of by others (films, fiction, documentaries), by authors but also YouTube, where self-representations are made public which was until recently difficult to imagine. Here the basic unit is the fragment: a polyphony (cacophony?) which does not ignore the macro/micro interrelationship as the only acceptable



**Figure 7.** Rogelio López Cuenca, *Historia de dos ciudades* (2010).

<sup>67</sup> See *Hojas de Ruta. Rogelio López Cuenca* (exhibition catalogue), Valladolid, Museo Patio Herteriano, 25 January–4 May 2008, p. 73.

<sup>68</sup> *Atopia: Art i ciutat al segle XXI* (exhibition catalogue), Barcelona, Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, 25 February–24 May 2010.

narrative option in the face of the obligation to doubt the possibility not only of some kind of realism but of reality itself.<sup>69</sup>

The work of **Marcos Ávila Forero** (Paris, 1983) is built on the question, how do human beings, objects, and ideas travel and transform themselves? A constant displacement that shows us what is beyond the borders that we know, an approach to the reality of the other. A good example of this is the video *Cayuco, Sil-lage Oujda/Melilla* (2013), which records Ávila Forero's action that consisted of dragging the plaster reproduction of a *cayuco* (a fishing boat frequently used for illegal immigration) from Oujda (on the Morocco-Algeria border) to Melilla (the Spanish enclave). Day after day, the plaster boat is depleted as a result of the friction against the ground, tracing at the same time the map of its movement and evoking in a poetic way the journey of many illegal immigrants who try to cross the border. This project, as Clément Dirié<sup>70</sup> has pointed out, follows the experience, the distance covered, and the landscapes crossed, and the remains of the boat's plaster evoke its own shipwreck, an art which lives, here and there, as a practice inserted into the flux of life and society. Marcos Ávila Forero traces the footprint of a meeting, a history, a journey; a journey of all the immigrants who try to cross the border from Morocco to Melilla. But beyond providing information about these journeys, the artist becomes a witness confronting the geographical and ideological barriers that exist in reality. Alejandra Riera (Buenos Aires, 1965) in collaboration with **Fulvia Carnevale** has also explored the way in which borders — both physical and psychological — define, question, document our contemporary world in the video *ENTRE/ACTE, I "Imágenes de frontera"*, a piece taken from their work in progress *De: maquettes-sans-qualité* (1997-2004), which exposed the pitiful situation of exploitation of the indigenous people of the Andes on the border between Argentina (La Quiaca) and Bolivia (Villazón).

## Cartography of the globalised space

The cartographies of the globalised space have also been rewritten by many artists who contemplate the activity of mapmaking as a new way of seeing and producing space, creating an identity and forming a border that geo-

69 Available at <https://li-mac.org/es/collection/limac-collection/rogelio-lopez-cuenca/works/history-of-two-cities> (consulted 6 April 2015).

70 Clément DIRIÉ, *Gabriele Chiari, Marcos Avila Forero, Marie-Anne Franqueville, Anne-Charlotte Yver*, Arles, Actes Sud, 2013, p. 6, Cahiers de Résidence, 4.

graphically codifies the social and natural worlds.<sup>71</sup> Among these we would highlight the collective **Multiplicity**, formed in 2000 in Milan by architects, town planners, photographers, artists, programmers, sociologists, economists, and producers, who define themselves as an “agency of territorial investigation”. Its activity centres on exploring the constant transformations in the morphology of European cities, analysing the social and political alterations of traditional spaces against the abnormal spaces that are created thanks to the existence of what they call the “secondary world”<sup>72</sup> and studying borders as “the other face of globalisation”.<sup>73</sup> The first of their research projects, *USE (Uncertain States of Europe)*, 2000), is a research programme articulated by a wide collaboration network about the tensions that are generated between the territorial mutation promoted by institutions and social forms of spontaneous self-organisation, unregulated or decentred, proposing a vision of Europe as the result of a constant relationship between urban transformation and social transformation.<sup>74</sup> Starting from a multitude of case studies, *USE* questions the model of representation of hegemonic European territory put forward by institutions as a “political/economic system endowed with a defined and circumscribed territorial perimeter”, relegating this vision to a simple “horizon of projection, the neutral substratum of a political representation whose uncertainty, whose imbalances, and whose ambitions reflect and suffer”.<sup>75</sup>

A new project, *Solid Sea* (fig. 8), presented within the framework of Documenta II in Kassel in 2012, can be defined as a multidisciplinary investigation of the geopolitical status of the Mediterranean Sea. Divided into four case studies, the project analyses the political, social, and economic conditions that define its nature and how this affects the identities of the people who cross it. The first case, *Solid Sea 01: The Ghost Ship* (2002), tackles the problem of the vulnerability of the lives of clandestine immigrants who try to cross the sea

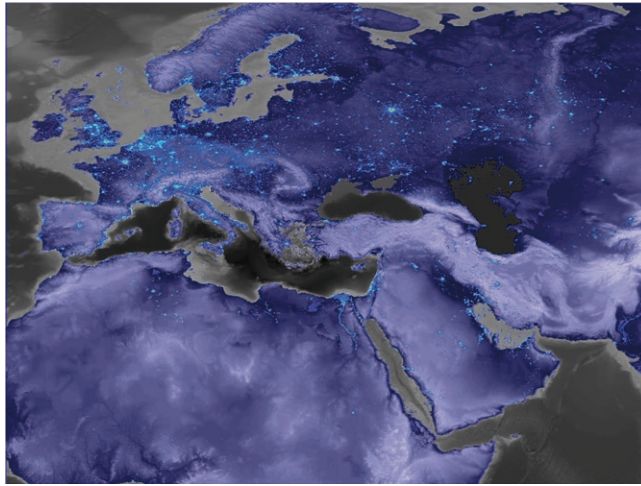
71 See John PICKLES, Sebastien COBARRUBIAS, and Maribel CASAS-CORTES, “Le regard cartographique, les nouvelles cartographies des frontières, et les responsabilités du cartographe”, in Kantuta QUIRÓS and Aliocha IMHOFF (eds.), *Géosthétique*, p. 37.

72 MULTIPLICITY, *USE: Uncertain States of Europe: A Trip through a Changing Europe*, Milan, Skira, 2003.

73 MULTIPLICITY, “Borders: The Other Side of Globalization”, in Scott McQUIRE and Nikos PASTERGIADIS (eds.), *Empires, Ruins + Networks: The Transcultural Agenda in Art*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 2005, pp. 169-184.

74 *USE* was part of the *Mutations* exhibition, organised by the architecture centre Arc en Rêve in Bordeaux in 2000 and later shown in other cities such as Milan, Brussels, and Tokyo.

75 Stefano BOERI, “Los Territorios de la Proyección”, in Rem KOOLHAAS, Stefano BOERI, Sanford KWINTER, Nadia TAZI, ARC EN RÊVE CENTRE D’ARCHITECTURE, HARVARD PROJECT ON THE CITY, and MULTIPLICITY, *Mutations* (exhibition catalogue), Barcelona and Bordeaux, Actar, 2000, pp. 357-358.



**Figure 8.** Multiplicity, *Solid Sea*, Kassel (2012). Video still.

from the north of Africa to reach the southern coast of Europe. The second case, *Solid Sea 2: Odessa / The World* (2003) — in collaboration with Armin Linke, Carlotta Cristiani, and Matteo Fraterno from the Observatorio Nómada — narrates the co-existence of two ships moored in the port of Naples which are parallel worlds conditioned by the political and economic status of their crew. For its part, *Solid Sea 03: The Road Map* (2003) centres on the complexity of the region of the West Bank, on the border between Israel and Palestine, in which the collective carries out a kind of experiment with which it seeks to confirm the thesis that the proliferation of political, physical, and psychological borders is the result of movements and interconnection at a global scale.<sup>76</sup> The project consists of the car journey between two checkpoints on road number 60 which crosses the territory vertically, first travelling with a passenger with an Israeli passport and then with another with a Palestinian passport. In the first case, the journey takes an hour; in the second, five and a half hours. With this project, the collective underlined the geopolitical particularities that characterise a geographical zone with a multitude of borders, checkpoints, fences, and security barriers.<sup>77</sup> And finally, *Solid Sea 04: M(RE) Tourism* (2004) studies the socio-political and symbolic impact of the flows and journeys that are made by more than two million Moroccans who live

<sup>76</sup> Alfredo CRAMEROTTI, “Who produces Aesthetic Journalism Today? From Which Position?”, in Alfredo CRAMEROTTI, *Aesthetic Journalism: How to Inform without Informing*, Bristol, Chicago, and Innsbruck, Intellect and Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen, 2009, p. 85.

<sup>77</sup> See [www.attitudes.ch/expos/multiplicity/road%20map\\_gb.htm](http://www.attitudes.ch/expos/multiplicity/road%20map_gb.htm) (consulted 12 January 2015).

abroad (MRE, *Marocains Résidents à l'étranger*) in their constant displacements between the north and south of the Mediterranean, constituting a double identity which in its performativity activates “significant transformations in the social and spatial condition of a large part of Morocco” and introduces “new models in the financial and investment systems, in types of building, and in the processes of urbanisation”.<sup>78</sup>

## Counter-cartographies

It is also interesting to highlight another group of artists who have turned to counter-cartographies with the aim of analysing global economic infrastructures in search of new forms of what Brian Holmes calls “cognitive cartography”.<sup>79</sup> A large proportion of the artists who took part in the exhibition *Atlas critique* (2012)<sup>80</sup> adopted these premises, including Erick Beltrán, Berger&Berger, Mark Boulos, Fernand Deligny, Pedro Lasch, Vincent Meessen, Nástio Mosquito, Stalker, and Adriana Varejao, who used radical and imaginary maps as tools for the production of knowledge, narrative, and realities.

Under this cartographic impulse we will highlight the French collective **Bureau d'études**, made up of Léonore Bonaccini and Xavier Fourt, which focuses on the creation of maps of global social, economic, and political systems. From initial projects at the end of the 1990s with a collection of political art called “archives of capitalism”, their later investigations take the form of a range of infographics, organigrams, and informational constellations that, according to Brian Holmes, “aspire to be cognitive tools, distributing as broadly as possible the kind of specialized information that was formerly confined to technical publications”.<sup>81</sup>

Combining art, theory, and research, their first visual analysis embodies the hidden structures that interconnect the lattice made up of financial entities, government organisations, insurance companies, and telephone compa-

78 MULTIPLICITY, “M(RE)Tourism”, in *Líneas de Mira*, pp. 49-50.

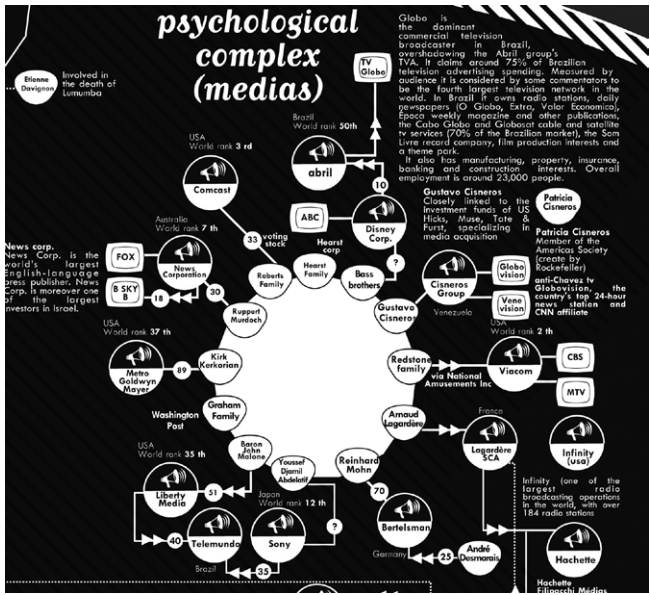
79 Brian HOLMES, *Imaginary Maps, Global Solidarities*, Rotterdam, Piet Zwart Institute, 2004. Available at <http://dialogic.blogspot.com.es/2008/06/brian-holmes-imaginary-maps-global.html> (consulted 14 February 2015).

80 *Atlas critique* was an exhibition commissioned by the collective *le peuple qui manque* (Kantuta Quirós and Aliocha Imhoff) in the Parc Saint Léger, Centre d'art contemporain, Pougues-les-Eaux, in the Burgundy region (17 March–27 May 2012).

81 Brian HOLMES, “Maps for the Outside: Bureau d'études, or the Revenge of the Concept”, in Ursula BIEMANN (ed.), *Geography and the Politics of Mobility*, p. 167.

nies that nourish neoliberal capitalism (*Financial Industrial Complex*, 2002).<sup>82</sup> In their 2003 work *World Monitoring Atlas*, one can visualise an extensive network of database systems with cross-linked information that affected both individual aspects as well as those related to transnational companies, governments, armed forces, international agencies, and citizens' groups. And in contrast to the geographic map, based on a phenomenological concept of space, this cartogram or diagram (in the sense in which Deleuze uses this term from Foucault's concept of the microphysics of power) was a digital and structural representation. That is to say, a map of global flows that described not so much a static network as a productive matrix, a dynamic field in which tensions are maximised in an indefinite number of heterogeneous points.

Another of their cartograms with political references is the project *Gouvernement mondial* (2003, 2005, 2013) (fig. 9), which involves an extensive politico-economic map that brings together the invisible power relationships that finance the status quo on a global scale, composed of a complex web of state legal systems, commercial treaties between countries and regions, financial entities, multimillionaire individuals and groups, investment groups, in-



**Figure 9.** Bureau d'études, *Gouvernement mondial* (2003, 2005, 2013). Courtesy of the collective.

82 Available at [http://bureaudetudes.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/gouvernementality\\_e.pdf](http://bureaudetudes.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/gouvernementality_e.pdf) (consulted 15 January 2015).

ternational organisations, intelligence services and state agencies, lobby groups, scientific-technological research teams, religious institutions, NGOs, etc. *Gouvernement mondial* is put forward as an intellectual complex “which is able to coordinate, accumulate and concentrate the means for defining the norms and determining the development of capitalism”.<sup>83</sup>

Started and designed by the Slovenian artist Marko Peljhan in 1997 for that year’s Documenta 10 in Kassel, *Makrolab* is a temporary inhabitable space for research and communication, an autonomous container designed to be able to support the continuous activity of a group of six artists and scientists over 120 days in conditions of isolation. According to Peljhan, it is a laboratory in development for open and integral inquiry and shared work between artists, scientists, and media professionals about questions related to immigration, research, time, and climate change.<sup>84</sup>

The final objective of the project is the construction of an independent station in the Arctic which operates as a laboratory investigating the relationship between art and science. Peljhan identifies the interior structure as the field of social (micro)relations that represents a centre of communication while also being a tool or device for reflection. The geographical location of the station is deliberately remote, and the conditions of physical isolation contrast with the equipment of communications systems, presenting the observation of the world only through mediators. The project’s thesis is that only the intense communication of isolated individuals in a restricted space for a prolonged period of time in such a remote location can generate the codes for the evolution of social relationships better than wide-reaching social and political movements.<sup>85</sup>

## The global city

As José M. García Cortés argues, “the urban space of our global cities is the privileged place in which macropolitical intervention and micro-politics can find convergent and interdependent areas, where transversalities are formed that do not ignore the global (the social context) or the molecular and subjective

83 Available at <http://bureaudetudes.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/worldgovernment2004txt.pdf> (consulted 13 January 2015).

84 Available at <http://timeline.1904.cc/tiki-index.php?page=Makrolab> (consulted 14 January 2015).

85 Marko PELJHAN, *INSULATION/ISOLATION PROCEEDINGS: Lecture for the 100 Days-100 Guests dX Programme*. Available at <http://ellipsetours.free.fr/wikiblog/wakka.php?wiki=Blog-20050131010116-Textes> (consulted 14 January 2015).

(mental ecology), given that the critique of central power cannot be detached from the questioning of the experiences and practices of everyday life”.<sup>86</sup>

This has been understood by a good number of artists, including **Francesco Jodice** (Naples, 1967), who in 2006 started a series of documentaries (a hybrid between a film production, a work of art, and a documentary work) about contemporary mega-cities under the title *Citytellers*. This is a research project in which he explores various social phenomena and their interactions with space, examining socio-political transformations in cities and other communities. The interdisciplinary focus through which he combines analysis from anthropology, sociology, and architecture enables him to provide a panoramic vision of certain problems that result from the tension between the micro-histories and the big narratives of the global city. These tensions occur in the contemporary space which, according to Rafael Pinilla, is at the same time a symptom of a crisis and a tool that provides a potential for re-subjectivism.<sup>87</sup>

The first work of this project, the video *Sao Paulo Citytellers* (2006)<sup>88</sup> (fig. 10), approaches from everyday experience the many social inequalities that characterise the Brazilian mega-city, creating an emotional topography of a city that is segregated in urbanistic, economic, and social terms; a portrait constructed from first-person narrations of the experiences of the tasters, gov-



**Figure 10.** Francesco Jodice, *Sao Paulo\_Citytellers*. Video-still.

86 José Miguel G. CORTÉS (ed.), *Cartografías disidentes* (exhibition catalogue), Madrid, Sociedad Estatal para la Acción Cultural Exterior (SEACEX), 2008 (no page numbers). Of José Miguel G. Cortés, see also *Malas Calles* (exhibition catalogue), Valencia, Institut Valencià d'Art Modern IVAM), 11 February–21 March 2010.

87 Rafael PINILLA, “Francesco Jodice: *The Secret Traces*”, in Anna Maria GUASCH (ed.), *La memoria del otro*, pp. 87–88.

88 See VARIOUS AUTHORS, *27th Bienal de São Paulo: Como viver junto. How to live together*, chief curator Lisette Lagnado, São Paulo, Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 2006.

ernment workers, and believers of a Protestant church that form part of the Carioca society, proposing the proliferation of self-management as a tool to compensate for the difficulties derived from the government of the hyper-city. In a new instalment, *Dubai Citytellers* (2010), the artist investigates various non-official accounts of life experience in the artificial city of Dubai, the most vivid proof that today petroleum is the world's most valued natural resource. Built in the desert and made up of luxury residential estates and complexes, skyscrapers, luxury shops, and fast food establishments, Dubai is a meeting place not only for business but also for all those people who are attracted by luxury and its supposed quality of life. The excessive growth of this city lies, without any doubt, in the power of manual labour, which is at the base of the social pyramid, degraded to the condition of a new slavery. The mosaic of stories that make up the fabric of the visual essay and anthropological, socio-economic, and political analysis of the phenomenon by experts shows the price that has to be paid — human, material, and environmental — to allow the existence of such a capitalist paradise. Workers and other inhabitants of the city talk from their experiences of the living and working conditions in this artificial oasis, making an equation that compares the unsustainable economic and urbanistic expansion with the devastating effects of the financial crisis that erupted in 2008.<sup>89</sup>

**Rogelio López Cuenca** also joined up to this reflection on the global postmodern city, overflowing with signs, in a 2002 work, the installation *As-tillógrafo* presented in the Spanish Pavilion of the 25<sup>th</sup> Bienal de São Paulo with the overall slogan of “Metropolitan Iconographies.” The work, whose title alludes to an improvised tour or journey (in reality an interrelation between the two basic spaces of the city, the public and the private, the house and the street where maps, notices, magazines, billboards, leaflets, and stickers come together) is a reflexion about the wounds of the city of São Paulo as a metaphor of the poetic and political reality of Brazil. Conceived as a tour, the installation includes the São Paulo metro line, the lines of points which draw the circuits of the train, and a series of pictograms, as in *Ponto de Desencontro*, where the city has become an anti-city. The pictogram inverts the direction of the arrows, pointing them to dispersion and finally to disagreement, to the isolation of the individual in the mega-city. And a new pictogram *Ducham (S)P*, in clear reference to Duchamp's work *Patron stoppage* as the bearer of “canned chance”, projects us again towards the uncertain and

89 Available at <http://www.mambo-bologna.org/mostre/mostra-65/> (consulted 3 May 2019).

mobile map of São Paulo where indetermination imposes itself on the precise cartography. As pointed out by Rogelio López Cuenca and the show's curator Alicia Chillida, *Astillágrafo* is an imaginary artefact, a “*machine célibataire*”, whose work is that of writing about the city's wounds. In this splintering writing, the city appears as a sum of failed dreams, accident, chaos and chance.<sup>90</sup>

For another perspective, based on a meeting of interests between mass communications media, urban culture, and the city space, we have to situate the work of the group **Raqs Media Collective**, founded in New Delhi in 1992. A work that seeks to implement alternative strategies for the production and distribution of information in the World Wide Web. Their project *The Promised City* (2010) should be highlighted, a reflection on various cultural environments of Berlin, Warsaw, and Bombay, three metropolitan cities on two different continents which exemplify many other cities in the world united by a similar way of understanding politics, the economy, the entertainment industry, consumerism, and commerce.

A part of this collaborative process is provided in the video-essay *The Capital of Accumulation* (2010), which connects each of the three cities through Rosa Luxemburg's contributions to social theory through her 1913 work *Die Akkumulation des Kapitals: Ein Beitrag zur ökonomischen Erklärung des Imperialismus* (The accumulation of capital: A contribution to an economic explanation of capitalism) through the narrative device of the search for the body of the Marxist theorist. For Raqs Media, Rosa's broken body is the metaphor of the consequences of the process of extraction with which capitalism dominates other economic systems. In the Raqs work, the trope of the absent body repeated in Rosa Luxemburg's economic and political work is conjured up in a disappeared body which has been removed when industrial capitalism expands to other spheres through its parasitic capacity.<sup>91</sup>

Commenting on *The Capital of Accumulation*, one member of the Sudhadrata Sengupta collective explains how it shows the results of the speleological practice of memory, noting that the work puts forward questions about what happens if you excavate into the interior of the Earth, what happens if

90 Alicia CHILLIDA and Rogelio LÓPEZ CUENCA, “Ciudades Por-venir”, in *Astillágrafo*, Spanish pavilion, 25th Edition of the São Paulo Biennial. *Iconografias metropolitanas* (exhibition catalogue), São Paulo, 23 March–2 June 2002, p. 18.

91 Zygmunt BAUMAN, *Capitalismo Parasitário: E Outros Temas Contemporâneos*, Rio de Janeiro, Zahar, 2010.

you excavate in the memory, if you excavate in history, and what protrudes from the earth in this excavation.<sup>92</sup>

Raqs Media Collective practises geography through memory, that is to say, the narrative structure is developed in parallel with the creation of imaginary geographies through lines of experience that go beyond a specific cartographic representation. Rather than delineate, these geographies multiply and superimpose the territory and the administration of experience.

As one can conclude in the exhibition *En suspensión*,<sup>93</sup> a part of the photographic work of **Alexander Apóstol** (Barquisimeto, Venezuela, 1969) which offers, in Iria Candela's words, "A direct visual proof of the process of interruption and abandonment of different architectural projects in his country of origin".<sup>94</sup> In the photographic series *Residente Pulido* (2001) (fig. 11), one of the first works about this type of architecture and "suspended" urbanism, the artist shows the state of abandonment of several modernist buildings of the 1950s, bricked up and rendered unusable by means of various digital interventions. In this line of work, the photographic series *Skeleton Coast* (2005) recreates in gigantic cement structures ("immobile dinosaurs" in the words of the artist) what was to be-



**Figure 11.** Alexander Apóstol, *Residente Pulido* (2001).

92 Sengupta's statements have been taken from an interview in the online catalogue of *Manifesta 9*. Available at <http://catalog.manifesta9.org/en/#/en/video-raqs-media-collective-shuddhabrata-sengupta/> (consulted 16 January 2015).

93 *En suspensión: Alexander Apóstol, Cinthia Marcelle, Héctor Zamora* (exhibition catalogue), Castelló, Espai d'Art Contemporani de Castelló (EACC), 28 September–30 December 2012.

94 Iria CANDELA, "En suspensión", in *En suspensión: Alexander Apóstol, Cinthia Marcelle, Héctor Zamora*, pp. 6-7.

come one of the most prominent touristic complexes of Venezuela, the Caribbean island of Margarita, to show the ruinous evidence of uncontrolled developmental politics that are the fruit of a “disastrous petroleum-based economy, where grandiloquence, opportunism, and corruption are caught between economic urgency and the cronyism of political power.”<sup>95</sup> In a new series, *Av. Caracas, Bogotá* (2006), the artist shows abandoned constructions in the Avenida Caracas de Bogotá (Colombia) which, like other buildings in Caracas, are under the permanent custody of military personnel. And Candela concludes:

That one finds an aborted architecture in the same way in Venezuela as in its neighbour Columbia shows to what point the double phenomenon studied by Apóstol — development and regression, urban planning and social deterioration — is not limited to a national context and nor is it continental.<sup>96</sup>

A new work, in this case a video, *Ghost City* (2006), presented in the *Cartografías disidentes*<sup>97</sup> project curated by José Miguel G. Cortés, collects the testimonies of a group of individuals of different ages, sexes, districts, and social sectors who narrate their own stories — many of them tied to instinctive or psychological fears — about the daily life of their city, Caracas. As José Miguel G. Cortés writes: “The stories are strange and fanciful, but perhaps we can understand them as metaphors of a city, Caracas, and a country, Venezuela, where fear occupies a fundamental place in people’s daily existence.”<sup>98</sup>

For his part, **Carlos Garaicoa** (Havana, 1967), in a renewed dialogue between art and urban space, explores the social structure of cities from the concept of the city as a symbolic space that appears in writers such as Jorge Luis Borges and Italo Calvino. Through a set of architectural models, drawings, videos, and photographs, Garaicoa takes as a starting point the once-rich Cuban architectural heritage, especially that of Havana, to delve into colonial, modern, and socialist discourses about architecture and town planning. In the installation *Continuidad de una arquitectura ajena* [Continuity of a foreign architecture], presented in Documenta II in Kassel (2002), the artist, starting from photographic documents of unfinished projects and ruins of the failed revolution in Cuba, reconstructs them digitally and transforms them into mod-

<sup>95</sup> Alexander Apóstol. *Modernidad Tropical* (exhibition catalogue), León and Barcelona, MUSAC and Actar, 2010, p. 84.

<sup>96</sup> Iria CANDELA, “En suspensión”, p. 7.

<sup>97</sup> José Miguel G. CORTÉS (ed.), *Cartografías disidentes*.

<sup>98</sup> José Miguel G. CORTÉS (ed.), *Cartografías disidentes*.

els of visionary “archiscapes” that, according to Okwui Enwezor, “represent a melancholic reflection on the impasse in which one finds the revolutionary principles of third-world intellectuals”.<sup>99</sup> A new show of the commitment to and knowledge of his birth city of Havana is demonstrated by the video *El año de la rata* [The year of the rat] (2008) in which the artist “shows us another part of the cartography of exclusion and the rootlessness that is produced in this city, a place of fast place and furtive looks”.<sup>100</sup> The images of the video offer us the meeting between the names of the streets, the facades of buildings and shops, their commercial signs like prints of a culture, that of China, which exists, almost invisibly, within the Havana community. An island within another island, the geography of a community, of a double estrangement, from their country of origin and from the culture and traditions of the host.

99 Okwui ENWEZOR, “Entre el concepto de dispositivo y lo subjetivo: La arquitectura post-utópica de Carlos Garaicoa”, in *Carlos Garaicoa. Noticias recientes* (exhibition catalogue), Burgos, Centro de Arte Caja de Burgos, 28 January–1 May 2011, p. 22.

100 José Miguel G. CORTÉS (ed.), *Cartografías disidentes*.

## 2

# THE ECOLOGICAL TURN



## From geography to ecology

On a parallel track to the geographical turn, since the start of the twenty-first century there has been a growing interest in linking art and contemporary theory to a new politico-ecological theory involved in environmental activism in the search for an eco-aesthetic that includes geographical areas as diverse as the Arctic, Indonesia, Europe, and Mexico. We are dealing, as T.J. Demos<sup>1</sup> indicates, with new aesthetic strategies through which recent ecological emergencies, including the crisis in climate change, find a response in the field of artistic practices and, in a broader sense, in that of visual culture.

In this sense, the exhibition *Ecovention: Current Art to Transform Ecologies* (2002),<sup>2</sup> featuring works of artists such as Joseph Beuys, Mel Chin, Helen and Newton Harrison, Robert Smithson, Alan Sonfist, and Mierle Laderman Ukeles, implied a kind of rite of passage between the old categories through which art relates to nature — such as land art, earthworks, environmental art, and ecological art — and the new ecological politics. According to this new politics, what is fundamental is no longer the mere protection of nature but the search for a common world based on the union of humans and non-humans on the basis of a defence of economic sustainability, biodiversity, and new terms such as ecovention, which proposes creative solutions to the degradation of the environment. Later, new exhibitions such as *Beyond Green: Toward a Sustainable Art*<sup>3</sup>

1 T. J. DEMOS, “Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology: An Introduction”, in *Third Text* (vol. 27, no. 1, January 2013, p. 1).

2 Coined in 1999, the term ecovention (ecology + invention) describes an artist-initiated project that employs an inventive strategy of physically transforming local ecologies. Alan Sonfist, one of the artists present in the exhibition, holds that one of the fundamental tasks of the artist consists in restoring the landscape: “[one must] repair the hole in the psyche which is left when all traces of our biological and ecological roots are obliterated.”

3 *Beyond Green: Toward a Sustainable Art* (exhibition catalogue), Chicago and New York, Smart Art Museum, University of Chicago and Independent Curators International, 6 October 2005–15 Jan-

(2005) — based on the idea that sustainable design has the potential to transform our daily lives through an approach that balances environmental, social, economic, and aesthetic concerns — and *Still Life: Art, Ecology, and the Politics of Change*<sup>4</sup> (8 Sharjah Biennial, 2007) — through the works of 70 international artists, most of them new site-specific projects, such as those of Graham Gussin, Lara Almarcegui, Tue Greenfort, Marjetica Potrč, Tomas Saraceno, and Marya Kazoun — built bridges towards the new relationships between biopolitics and eco-aesthetics, including questions along the lines of: To what extent does neoliberal globalisation act on the financialisation of nature? Or how to rethink and expand ecology towards activist practices? Among works that were part of an interdisciplinary network that included both the scientific and the culture, one that stands out is *Exceeding 2° C* (2007–2014) by Tue Greenfort, which tried to control the air conditioning and average temperature inside the Sharjah Museum. Raising the temperature by two degrees inside the museum during the Biennial implied a saving of energy and a reduction in the consumption of electricity, a saving that was used to acquire an area of jungle in Ecuador through the environmental organisation Nepenthes.

These exhibitions, like the later *Radical Nature. Art and Architecture for a Changing Planet 1969–2009*<sup>5</sup> (2009) — which brought together key figures from different generations, such as the architects' collective Ant Farm, the visionary architect Richard Buckminster Fuller, historic artists such as Joseph Beuys, Agnes Denes, Hans Haacke, and Robert Smithson and contemporary ones such as Heather and Ivan Morison, R&Sie(n) and Simon Starling — also proposed utopian solutions to the growing degradation of the natural world. It was made clear that we were witnessing a notable change from the traditional climatic discourse of the environment towards new questions about what role should be played by art in an ethical-political reinvention of life in the face of climate change.

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uary 2006. *Beyond Green*, curated by Stephanie Smith, included the following artists: Allora & Calzadilla, Free Soil, JAM, Learning Group, Nils Norman, People Powered, Dan Peterman, Marjetica Potrč, Michael Rakowitz, Frances Whitehead, Wochenklausur, and Andrea Zittel.

4 *Sharjah Biennial 8: Still Life: Art, Ecology, and the Politics of Change* (exhibition catalogue), Sharjah, Sharjah Art Museum, 4 April–4 June 2007. One of the show's curators, Eva Scharrer, wrote: "In that peculiar time and place, we aim to introduce a slightly different — at times ephemeral — kind of aesthetic, including a DIY-approach and associations to recycling, which will question the love of luxury and the ever faster, higher lifestyle, specifically in the regional context of the Sharjah Biennial, as well as our daily ways of production and consumption. Via strategies of deconstruction and contamination, but also through the use of metaphor, humour and play, the artists taking part in the Sharjah Biennial 8, will make visible some of the daily absurdities, within which society exists today."

5 *Radical Nature: Art and Architecture for a Changing Planet 1969–2009* (exhibition catalogue), London, Barbican Art Gallery, 19 June–18 October 2009.

T. J. Demos, in the text entitled “The Politics of Sustainability: Art and Ecology” in the catalogue of *Radical Nature*, places himself in front of new artistic practices defined by new imperatives in relation to an ethics of life and a politics of government regarding the environment and the challenges posed by climate change and asks: What meaning do we give to sustainability? Which interests are promoted and which are excluded?<sup>6</sup> And this is in line with Félix Guattari’s reflections in his text *Les trois écologies* (1989),<sup>7</sup> which defends a transversal approach that links different registers of ecology — the subjective-mental, the social, and the environmental — with an ethical-aesthetic practice. Hence the concept of ecophilosophy based on the theory of the three ecologies. The first, environmental ecology, related to the environment, is the ordinary view. The second, social ecology, is based on a clear opposition to integrated global capitalism, recreating spaces of individual economy and autonomy and of reinvented social and family relationships. And, finally, would be mental ecology, which would allow the rehabilitation of subjectivity and singularity.

From these benchmarks, Guattari proposes a concept of political ecology valid both from political-ecological theory and from contemporary eco-aesthetic theory. Following Guattari, nature becomes more than ever inseparable from culture; and if we have to understand interactions between ecosystems, the “mechanosphere”, and the baseline social and individual universes, we have to learn to think transversally. Various disasters of social ecology include the deterritorialisation of the Third World, which simultaneously affects the cultural texture of populations and devastates the climate and human defences. And it is in this context that Guattari, going beyond the pseudoscientific paradigms in usage, proposes a transdisciplinary approach to these three ecologies:

This is not simply due to the complexity of the entities under consideration but more fundamentally to the fact that the three ecologies are governed by a different logic to that of ordinary communication between speakers and listeners which has nothing to do with the intelligibility of discursive sets, or the indeterminate interlocking of fields of signification. It is a logic of intensities, of auto-referential existential assemblages engaging in irreversible durations. It is the logic not only of human subjects constituted as totalized bodies, but also of psychoanalytic partial objects — what Winnicott calls transitional objects [...]

6 T. J. DEMOS, “The Politics of Sustainability: Art and Ecology”, in *Radical Nature: Art and Architecture for a Changing Planet 1969-2009*, pp. 16-30.

7 Félix GUATTARI, *Les trois écologies*, Paris, Éditions Galilée, 1989.

Ecological praxes strive to scout out the potential vectors of subjectification and singularization at each partial existential locus.<sup>8</sup>

Guattari's proposal of contemplating the three ecologies — the environmental, the social, and the mental — in a simultaneous way to lead to what he calls an “ecosophy”, which has an ethical-political character, has given way in the last years to numerous discursive and artistic practices that confront us with a new way of understanding the relationships between human beings, geography, and nature. Or, to put it in other words, the local, personal, and collective levels that in turn include the aesthetic, understanding by aesthetic the production of oneself as an individual. Because Guattari ultimately refers to the question of creativity: ecosophy must delegate the potential of individual and collective creativity. He gives the example of the artist who can see himself or herself driven to revise a work by adding a small detail that positions everything in another direction, towards other existential territories, as he says, territories that concern the body, the immediate environment, or also big contextual complexes related to ethnicity or humanity.

From Guattari's three ecologies, which were followed by a new reflection in the 1992 text *Chaosmosis*, in which the thinker referred to a new aesthetic paradigm based on the so-called “ecosophic object”,<sup>9</sup> there has been an increasingly abundant number of approaches to a new concept of ecology applied to art and aesthetic theory. A good example of this Timothy Morton's thesis in *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*<sup>10</sup> and that of Emily Apter<sup>11</sup> included in the monographic edition of the magazine *Third Text* dedicated to the politics of ecology, and according to which planetary dysphoria (understanding by dysphoria, from the Greek *disphoros*, the opposite of euphoria, a disagreeable or uncomfortable emotion such as sadness or worry) would capture the geo-psychoanalytical state of the world in its more depressing forms, “awaiting the triumphant revenge of acid, oil and dust. These elements demonstrate a certain agency: they are sentient materi-

8 Félix GUATTARI, *Les trois écologies*, p. 10. English translation, *The Three Ecologies*, trans. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton, London and New Brunswick (New Jersey), The Athlone Press, 2000, pp. 44-45.

9 Félix GUATTARI, “The Ecosophic Object”, in *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995, pp. 119-135. The original version in French was published in 1992 (*Chaosmose*, Paris, Éditions Galilée).

10 Timothy MORTON, *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, Harvard University Press, 2009.

11 Emily APTER, “Planetary Dysphoria”, in *Third Text* (vol. 27, no. 1, January 2013, pp. 131-140).

als even if they are not fully licensed subjectivized subjects”.<sup>12</sup> The new planetary aesthetic would thus be made up of a renewed sensitivity towards processes both real and imagined such as the destruction of the Earth and the end of life as we know it.

This concept, which points to the dissolution between nature and culture or society already formulated by Guattari, is repeated with distinct nuances in the thinking of Bruno Latour, who says that it is imperative to break free from the concept of nature, given its ideological charge, which is employed strategically by the political hegemony to neutralise a depoliticised scientific discourse based on facts. Latour argues that to articulate a political ecology it is not enough to insert nature into politics and that it is crucial to integrate science, understood as the capacity to adopt non-human perspectives in the creation of a common world that is based on a questioning of scientific authority whose claims lead to a democratic politics.<sup>13</sup>

This is also the central proposition of the *Anthropocene Project* which, in turn, announced a change of paradigm both in the natural sciences and in the way of proposing new models for culture, politics, and the everyday. As coined in the 1980s by the biologist Eugene F. Stoermer and popularised by the chemist Paul J. Crutzen, who considered that the influence of human behaviour on the Earth's atmosphere is so significant as to constitute a new geological age, the basis of the Anthropocene (from the Greek *antropos*, human, and *cene*, new), our current geological epoch is underpinned by the claim that humanity is the driving force behind planetary transformation. And if the opposition between humanity and nature has been dissolved, what processes should we experience to change our perspectives and perceptions? How to draw the borders of a planetary garden in constant expansion? Is it necessary to re-think the nature of economies or should we assign nature its own economy? What is the impact of the Anthropocene on the actual global world?<sup>14</sup>

Some of these questions were posed in the show *The Whole Earth*,<sup>15</sup> headed by the image of the “blue planet”, a new perspective of the Earth, seen from beyond, an image that had given shape to the notion of the era of the whole world (the entire world and globalisation, from the perspective of a society

<sup>12</sup> Emily APTER, “Planetary Dysphoria”, p. 140.

<sup>13</sup> Bruno Latour, *Politiques de la Nature: Comment Faire Entrer les Sciences en Démocratie*, Paris, La Découverte, 1999.

<sup>14</sup> See Benjamin H. BRATTON, “Some Trace Effects of the Post-Anthropocene: On Accelerationist Geopolitical Aesthetics”, in *e-flux* (no. 46, 2013). Available at [www.e-flux.com/journal/some-trace-effects-of-the-post-anthropocene-on-accelerationist-geopolitical-aesthetics/](http://www.e-flux.com/journal/some-trace-effects-of-the-post-anthropocene-on-accelerationist-geopolitical-aesthetics/) (consulted 30 January 2015).

<sup>15</sup> *The Whole Earth* (exhibition catalogue), Berlin, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 26 April–7 July 2013.

that is linked, thanks to the internet, to the current debate about climate change). Dedicated to exploring the history of the image of our planet Earth — specifically the history of the photograph published for the first time by Stewart Brand in 1968 which led to the movement later known as “Californian Ideology”, an alliance between the hippy and cybernetic cultures, romantic nature and technology— artists such as Nabil Ahmed, Ant Farm, Eleanor Antin, Jordan Belson, Erik Bulatov, Angela Bulloch, Bruce Conner, Robert Frank, Silvia Kolbowski, David Laelas, Sharon Lockhart, Adrian Piper, Ira Schneider, and The Otolith Group approached the Californian counter-cultures as an environmental movement that prepared the upsurge of online culture, the internet, and a globally networked society, without excluding debates about climate change at the heart of globalisation.

A similar approach was provided by the show *7 000 000 000* (2014),<sup>16</sup> which presented a set of artists — among them, Núria Güell, Basurama, Johan Grimonprez, The Otolith Group, Tue Greenfort, Daniela Ruiz and Xosé Quiroga, Oliver Ressler, Ursula Biemann, and Regina José Galindo — united by a common denominator: that the art of the twenty-first century, of a planet always on a global scale, expresses a new kind of contract between living beings, animals, plants, products and objects, understanding the planet Earth as a vast network in which new states of material and new forms of relationship appear.

Starting from the hypothesis that the sphere of interhuman relationships can be seen only on the basis of factors such as the environment and ecology and that this can only be inscribed in the physicality of the planet, the artists seem to select the new geographical turn and focus their interest on material geography, on the ontology of the world of the material, as can be seen in Johan Grimonprez’s videoblog *On Radical Ecology and Tender Gardening* (2012), a bank of free knowledge shared on YouTube through a series of categories (bioculture, radical ecology, education, transitional work) based on a new radical ecology in the field of sustainability and new relationships between humans and nature.

A new exhibition, *The Great Acceleration* (Tapei Biennial, 2014), referred directly to the idea of the Anthropocene within the geological turn, marked by human activity in our biosphere, and showed the extent to which contemporary art expresses a new contract between human beings, animals, plants, machines, products, and objects. With more than fifty artists and collectives, Nicolas Bourriaud organised the show around the cohabitation of human con-

<sup>16</sup> David ARLANDIS and Javier MARROQUÍ (eds.), *7 000 000 000* (exhibition catalogue), Castelló, Espai d’Art Contemporani de Castelló (EACC), 31 January–27 April 2014.

sciousness with a swarm of animals, data processing, the growth of plants, and the slow movement of matter. And this with a single main aim: to highlight that human beings are only one element among many in a wide-ranging network, which entails rethinking our relational universe and reconsidering the role of art in this new mental landscape.<sup>17</sup>

## The project of the Anthropocene

It is within this territory that one finds the work of the collective **World of Matter**, an artistic and research platform which includes artists, architects, and photojournalists and which analyses contemporary ecological resources in the intersection of the areas of geography, art history, and cultural theory. From investigating primary components such as fossils, minerals, agrarian and maritime elements, and the complex ecologies of which they form part, the project tries to respond to the need to develop ethical approaches to the management of resources, keeping in mind that the materials of the planet are inevitably a source for human consumption. The interdependence of human and non-human actors in this fragile system in areas such as the Amazon basin, cotton producers in India, the ecologies, fishing in the Dutch polders, and the cultivable earth of Ethiopia form the basis of projects from artists such as Mabe Bethonico, Ursula Biemann and Paulo Tavares, Frauke Huber and Uwe H. Martin, Helge Mooshammer and Peter Mörtenböck, Emily E. Scott, Judy Price, and Lonnie van Brummelen and Siebren de Haan.<sup>18</sup>

As the group itself pointed out in the magazine *Third Text*,<sup>19</sup> a collective response to the crisis of resources consists of confronting the politics of austerity and the dominant culture of greed with the provision of open-source material. Hence the willingness by various members of the group to share materials of their own work in an open-access register that connects different files, actors, territories, and ideas, beyond any hint of hierarchical narrative structure. More than videos or full-length works, the various materials, as is the case with

17 Among the artists present at the Taipei Biennial (Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 13 September 2014–4 January 2015) were: Gilles Barbier, Roberto Cabot, Ian Cheng, Chun-Teng Chu, Roger Hiorns, Joan Jonas, Tetsumi Kudo, Maria Loboda, Tala Madani, Nathaniel Mellors, Henrik Olesen, Ola Pehrson, Rachel Rose, Timur Si-Qin, Nicolas Uriburu, Haegue Yang, and Anicka Yi.

18 Available at [www.worldofmatter.net](http://www.worldofmatter.net) (consulted 21 April 2014).

19 Ursula BIEMANN, Peter MÖRTENBÖCK, and Helge MOOSHAMMER, “From Supply Lines to Resource Ecologies: World of Matter”, in *Third Text* (vol. 27, no. 1, January 2013, pp. 76–94).

the 2015 project *Exposing Resource Ecologies*,<sup>20</sup> are edited within a multiplicity of documents and videoclips that can be reconfigured and connected to each other, providing new perspectives of relationship between different sources and locations.

Some members of World of Matter, such as Ursula Biemann, actively took part in the formation of the *Anthropocene Project* (2013-2014) in the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin, where artists, filmmakers, scientists, and academics such as Akeel Bilgrami, Arno Brandlhuber, Christina von Braun, Claire Colebrook, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Harun Farocki, Kodwo Eshun, Renée Green, Aldo Haesler, Rem Koolhaas, John Law, Xavier Le Roy, Emma Marris, Daniel Rosenberg, smudge studio, Will Steffen, Michael Taussig, Paulo Tavares, and John Tresch worked on a project that started from the premise that nature, as we know it, is a concept that belongs to the past. Nature is no longer a force separated from human activity, nature is not an obstacle and neither is it a harmonious other. Humanity forms nature. Humanity and nature are a single thing, embedded in the recent geological registry.

For its part, the exhibition #4: *The Dark Abyss of Time*, by Armin Linke, Territorial Agency (John Palmesino and Ann-Sofi Rönnskog), and Anselm Franke, was the fruit of research carried out in the framework of the project *The Anthropocene*, driven by the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin, which visualised the intricate social, political, and economic relationships that shape the geopolitical implications of the Anthropocene hypothesis.<sup>21</sup> Made up of a series of video pieces, documents, and large-format photographs, the multimedia installation presented interviews with experts on energetic economics, the law of the sea, geology, and sociology, who, together with representatives of activist and governmental organisations, analysed the legal obstacles and the economic interests that would impede an official acceptance of the Anthropocene hypothesis, at the same time discussing the effects of climate change and the alternative use of energies. In this sense, the project, as Bernd M. Scherer put it, generated “a geography of geoscience and politics, implicitly posing the question: which institutions do we actually need in order to characterize and shape the Anthropocene?”<sup>22</sup>

20 Krista LYNES and Michèle THÉRIAULT (eds.), *World of Matter: Exposing Resource Ecologies* (exhibition catalogue), Montreal, Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, 20 February–18 April 2015.

21 Available at [http://hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/2014/anthropozaenobservatorium20132014/the\\_dark\\_abyss\\_of\\_time/veranstaltung\\_101494.php](http://hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/2014/anthropozaenobservatorium20132014/the_dark_abyss_of_time/veranstaltung_101494.php) (consulted 23 December 2014).

22 Bernd M. SCHERER, “The Anthropocene Project: A Report on Two-Year Endeavor”, in *The Anthropocene Project: A Report*, Berlin, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 2014, p. 9.

With the 2005 work *Black Sea Files*, **Ursula Biemann** (Zürich, 1955) displaced the focus on interest in the cartography of the mobility of people and global information onto the importance and the materiality of natural resources. *Black Sea Files* is an investigation about oil production in the natural region of the Caucasus, the oldest area of extracting crude oil on the planet and which has supplied the West after being exploited first by Europe, later by the Soviet Union, and today by transnational consortia. The central element of the video is the construction of the Baku-Tiflis-Ceyhan pipeline, the second longest in the world at 1,768 kilometres, which connects the Caspian Sea with the Mediterranean Sea, crossing Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. Without doubt, as Brian Holmes argues, the video provides “a first approach to the human geography of such a massive infrastructural project, whose status as a technological artefact and an economic resource cannot and should not be separated from an awareness of the people whose environments and lives it traverses”.<sup>23</sup>

In a new work of 2012, *Egyptian Chemistry* (fig. 12), Biemann reflects upon the role of the River Nile in the configuration of the Egyptian economy and society, and speaks of the profound impact at a molecular level that has caused the alteration of the river course as a result of projects of hydraulic engineering and the use of chemical fertilizers. These forces add to the rural activism of the human forces that constitute their hybrid ecologies. In this way, the project proposes the nature of the water of the Nile as the origin of a network of organic, social, technological, and chemical processes, that give an account of the relationships between vision, productivity, nature, energy, resistance, and revolution. A similar study was carried out in *Deep Weather* (2013), where Biemann



**Figure 12.** Ursula Biemann, *Egyptian Chemistry* (2012).

<sup>23</sup> Brian HOLMES, “Extradisciplinary Investigations: Towards a New Critique of Institutions”, in *Ursula Biemann: Mission Reports: Artistic Practice in the Field: Video Works 1998-2008*, p. 161.

tackles one of the attempts of neoliberal capitalism to obtain non-renewable resources, such as the tar sands in Canada, a method which seeks to extract oil at any price even though it implies the irreversible destruction of the terrain, the negative impact on local species, and the profound contamination of water and air. The suggestion of the silent speech of the image in movement in *Deep Weather* is derived, according to T.J. Demos, “from the reverential attitude towards a sacred earth that is now profaned, as well as from the transmission of a secret expressed by a subterranean earth, from which emerges profound geological murmurs and sonic reverberations that slowly invade it”.<sup>24</sup> The second part of the video shows the impact of climate change on villages in Bangladesh where a dam is being built to absorb the devastating effects of rising waters. The force of human work is contrasted with the extraction machines in Alberta in a kind of “contemporary diagram of globalisation’s interconnected geographies”.<sup>25</sup>

This negative impact of neoliberal globalisation on ecosystems and on the management of territory is analysed from the perspective of the indigenous communities who live in the western Amazon in *Forest Law* (2014) (fig. 13, 14), a project carried out in collaboration with the architect and town planner Paulo Tavares in which the starting point was the court cases that historically have brought states into confrontation with multinationals over the control of natural resources, to speak of the historical, political, and ecological dimension of these conflicts and the multiple ethical and epistemic questions that they provoke. Far from illustrating a local or isolated story, the spatial and temporal analysis — which features the perspectives of aboriginals, geologists, cartographers, and activists — reflects a cosmopolitics that goes beyond the immediate territory and is inscribed in a global conflict dominated by the loss of biodiversity, the pollution of ecosystems, and the financialisation of nature.<sup>26</sup>

The collective **The Otolith Group**, founded in London in 2002 and made up of Anjalika Sagar and Kodwo Eshun, is nurtured by the hybrid cinematographic tradition characterised by Chris Marker and it combines filmic language and science fiction with the essay format. Training in anthropology and English literature constitutes the starting point of their visual investigations, based on analytical methodologies that impose a reflective distancing on the image. According to Kodwo Eshun, the artists at all times took decisions

24 T. J. DEMOS, “Spectro-Aesthetics 4/4. Idle No More”, in *Camera Austria* (no. 124, 2013, p. 71).

25 T. J. DEMOS, “Spectro-Aesthetics 4/4. Idle No More”, p. 71.

26 Ursula BIEMANN, Paulo TAVARES, and Yesomi UMOLU, *The Land Grant: Forest Law* (exhibition catalogue), East Lansing, Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, Michigan State University, 2014.



**Figures 13-14.** Ursula Biemann & Paulo Tavares, *Forest Law* (2014).

with the aim of blocking a kind of touristic gaze, spending time thinking about how to create an image that was contrary to expectations or which overrode the pleasures characterised by the image. In his view, the essayistic approach is precisely like this, the essayistic is dissatisfaction, discontent with the functions of an image and the obligations of a sound. It is dissatisfaction with all those expectations associated with a documentary form.<sup>27</sup>

This is about hybrid works that are the fruit of a combination of historical documents, archive material, and fictional narratives that are aware of the complex nature of the essay form, which, according to Kodwo Eshun, seeks to complicate the document considering questions of the present, the nature of the event, the behaviour of material, and the role of memory.<sup>28</sup> Works that

<sup>27</sup> Kodwo Eshun, interview with George Clark. Available at <http://otolithgroup.org/index.php?m=information> (consulted 17 January 2015).-

<sup>28</sup> Kodwo ESHUN, "On the Use and Abuse of Microgravity for Life", in Anna COLIN and Emily PETHICK (eds.), *The Otolith Group: A Long Time Between Suns*, Berlin, Sternberg Press, 2009, p. 25.

the artists consider as intellectual speculations and work tools, understanding the video essay as a form that thinks, as a philosophical practice. Their particular modulation of temporality is a constant feature of their work: their works project a future in which the past is presented as a trace with the capacity to shape the present and modify the future. This capacity comes from their claim to intervene in the historical narrative, defining a utopian potential of artistic practice which Giorgio Agamben calls “past-present futures”.<sup>29</sup>

One of their first works, *Otolith I* (2003), is set in the twenty-second century and visualises a future in which the human race is not able to bear the conditions of life on Earth and is forced to survive in the International Space Station. The doctor Usha Aderbaran, the future descendent of Anjalika Sagar, is an anthropologist who investigates the remains of life on Earth that can be experienced only by resorting to media archives. *Otolith I* imagines a future away from life on Earth, which, in T.J. Demos’s opinion, “signifies both a release from the gravity of history — that is, from the notion that time progresses implacably in only one direction — and a critical detachment from the present”.<sup>30</sup>

*Otolith II* (2007) returns to the Earth and is set in a new future, mixing fiction, archive material, and footage shot in Mumbai and Chandigarh. The film explores the emotional pressure put on the inhabitants of versions of the city of tomorrow who oppose and compete with each other. In *Otolith II*, modernity is located in Asia, Africa, and the Soviet Union, while the dominant discourse of alternative modernities is rejected, a history of failed strategies to dominate human poverty in Utopian projects with their monumental promises is challenged, and the inherent contradictions of the assumption that in the information era immaterial work has exhausted material work is shown.<sup>31</sup>

*Otolith III* (2009), the final piece of the trilogy, takes *Alien*, the film not made by the legendary Bengali filmmaker Satyajit Ray. Written in 1967, *Alien* would have been the first science-fiction film screened in India. *Otolith III* returned to the India of 1967 to propose an alternative journey in which the fictional characters of the film try to calculate the means of production to create the conditions of their lives as images, in an expansion which, according to Es-hun, “moves from the context of instability, disorientation, and endemic un-

29 Giorgio AGAMBEN, “The Time that Is Left”, in *Epoché* (vol. 7, no. 1, Autumn 2002, pp. 1-14).

30 T. J. DEMOS, “Sabotaging the Future: The Essay Films of the Otolith Group”, in Anna COLIN and Emily PETHICK (eds.), *The Otolith Group: A Long Time Between Suns*, p. 59.

31 Diana MCCARTY, “Gravic and Linear Acceleration: Otolith II and Performativity”, in Anna COLIN and Emily PETHICK (eds.), *The Otolith Group: A Long Time Between Suns*, p. 37.

balance as a result of the postcolonial consequences of refugees, immigrants, and diasporic citizens. It is not about everyone becoming an alien with a variable degree of gravity, but rather that the realities of this alien time scale suspend normality in a way that provides a revelation through a continuous logic of inversion. Microgravity is an event whose singularity destroys all metaphor and in this way permits the flourishing of thousands of allegories”.<sup>32</sup>

More directly implicated with ecology and, more specifically, within the framework of the Anthropocene project is the video essay *The Radiant* (2012), which explores the disastrous consequences of the Great Tohoku Earthquake which occurred on 11 March 2011 on the Pacific coast of Japan, unleashing a tsunami that left more than 15,800 people dead, 3,000 injured, and more than 5,000 missing, causing the partial collapse of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station. Combining historical video materials with new recordings of the affected territory and the testimonies of scientists, activists, and residents, the film retrieves the old promise of nuclear energy which governed the post-war world, contrasting this with the actual context of the devastation of the airborne and aquatic ecosystems provoked by the radiation, forming a critical fusion that brings multiple questions into the present. As if drawing an apocalyptic scenario worthy of science fiction, the video essay investigates the visible and audible traces of a devastated territory on which the lives of the people who have decided to remain there are exposed to the “necropolitics of radiation,”<sup>33</sup> a governance of death administered by TEPCO (Tokyo Electric Power Company) together with the Japanese political elite and the global nuclear regime orchestrated by the General Assembly and Security Council of the United Nations. As such, according to T.J. Demos, *The Radiant* exemplifies the negative utopianism of Fredric Jameson to the extent that the project “works like a mechanism to make the present different than it appears, sparking a political energy to resist what is already occurring”.<sup>34</sup>

The detection of infrasonic waves that provoked the Tohoku earthquake by the European Space Agency’s orbiting seismometer is the starting point for *Medium Earth* (2013), where the group explored the power of the seismic, the sensitive, and the sonic in a video essay that covered the continental crust of

32 Kodwo ESHUN, “On the Use and Abuse of Microgravity for Life”, p. 22.

33 Available at [http://bloodmountain.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/BMF\\_PR\\_2012.11.07.pdf](http://bloodmountain.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/BMF_PR_2012.11.07.pdf) (consulted 16 January 2015).

34 T. J. DEMOS, “Gardens Beyond Eden: Bio-Aesthetics, Eco-Futurism, and Dystopia at dOCUMENTA (13) and Beyond”, in Anna Maria GUASCH FERRER and Nasheli JIMÉNEZ DEL VAL (eds.), *Critical Cartography of Art and Visuality in the Global Age*, Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014, p. 250.

the plains of California in a kind of forensic investigation of the psychology of the geological activity of this particular geographical area of intense tectonic movement. Listening to the deserts, rocks, falls, and mountain ranges that make up the morphology of the lithosphere, the video essay extrapolates the human capacity to predict geological movements in a kind of speculation about the Earth's self-reflective and self-conscious capacity.<sup>35</sup> It is this willingness to give voice to the layer of sediments that are found beneath the most superficial layers of the Earth that allows the visual narrative of *Medium Earth's* geopoetics to mesh with the speculative realism of Quentin Meillassoux, whose critical theory seeks to address the task omitted by the Kantian tradition of being able to describe the world before human existence, arguing for a necessary contingency of the laws of nature.<sup>36</sup>

## The new ecologies

The work of **Tue Greenfort** (1973) is located at the intersection between art and science. His projects, in which he uses photography and experimental design, not only start from the observation of biological processes but also of social systems and dynamics that define the notion of the environment today. Greenfort develops ingenious strategies for the protection of endangered species, the development of alternative energies and recycling, and at the same time critically analyses the processes that convert natural resources, which are financed for private gain, and addresses the interests and ends to which cultural institutions programme exhibitions with "green" subjects.

His project *Diffuse Einträge* (2007), which formed part of in the 2007 edition (Skulptur Projekte 07) of the exhibition of public sculpture held every 10 years in the German city of Münster, took the form of a site-specific installation comprising a tank of fertiliser which, during the three months of the show, pumped out water from the Aasee lake through a closed circuit to which a chemical solution of iron chloride was added before it was returned to the lake. This chemical solution is precisely what Münster city council puts into

35 Anjalika Sagar and Kodwo Eshun speak of the state of their first research for the *Medium Earth* project in a conference-performance which took place within the festival *Where Are We Going, Walt Whitman? An Ecosophical Roadmap for Artists and other Futurists*, at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie (Amsterdam). Available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=6msLas9sBmg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6msLas9sBmg) (consulted 30 January 2015).

36 Quentin MEILLASSOUX, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, London and New York, Continuum, 2008.

the Aa river which feeds the lake to prevent the appearance of certain green algae that secrete a poisonous substance which provokes an allergic reaction when it comes into contact with the skin and which can cause serious dysfunctions in the organism if it is ingested. The project is thus an ironic critique of the cosmetic solution employed by the local government to eliminate algae that alter the idyllic appearance of this recreational area that forms part of the urban and rural landscape for the inhabitants of Münsterland, thereby avoiding addressing the cause of the problem, which stems from the deeply negative impact of the meat industry on the quality of the water. The council's justification to avoid the loss of European subsidies consists of citing in scientific reports that the intense pollution shown in the water provoked by the concentration of phosphates comes from "diffuse sources".<sup>37</sup>

His installation *Erdglass. Natur und andere städtische Täuschungen* (2013) (fig. 15), which was hosted by the Berlinische Galerie in Berlin, spoke about the effects on urban lighting of the process of industrialisation and vertiginous urbanisation which took place at the end of the nineteenth century in the German capital, where gas was replaced by electric lighting. Today, electric street lamps live side by side with some vestiges of the historical gas lamps and there are many popular initiatives to preserve examples of this kind of urban lighting. As if practising an archaeology of modernity, Greenfort created



**Figure 15.** Tue Greenfort, *Erdglass. Natur und andere städtische Täuschungen* (2013).

<sup>37</sup> Elna SVENLE, "Tue Greenfort", in *Wanås 2009: Footprints* (exhibition catalogue), Knislinge (Sweden), Wanås Foundation, 2009, p. 12.

an installation with various units of biogas that allowed visitors to have an idea of the process through which they can easily obtain energy of a form that is alternative to the contemporary energetic model based on nuclear sources. Greenfort's project extended to the urban area through historical street lamps placed around the whole city which used a biogas system generated by organic waste and which lighted up the darkness if they were activated by means of a switch.<sup>38</sup>

The artistic practice of **Nils Norman** (1966) centres on the development of site-specific projects that are sited in the public space and through which citizen participation is invited in his urban interventions that use models which combine art and experimental design. His focus starts from an understanding of ecology as a web of relationships — biological, technological, economic, political, and social — which are transformed into a practice belonging to a domain shared by ethics and aesthetics. The utopian dimension of his projects partly derives from his capacity to imagine alternatives to hegemonic social engineering promoted by neoliberal capitalism. As Norman himself points out:

On a general note, my practice as an artist is informed by ecological models and ideas, but this is only one small part of my practice — I don't regard myself as an "ecoartist" in any way. I focus on issues that are threaded through public space and urban regeneration. Ecological issues are one thread or one ecology amongst many.<sup>39</sup>

One of Nils Norman's most interesting projects, in which he combined his personal creative drive with a renewed activism, is *Geocruiser* (2001-2004), a vehicle for investigating the public space that was motorised with solar energy and hydrogen, and which travelled through North America and Europe. The artist considers it as a mobile urban sculpture that contains a small greenhouse at the back and a reading toom at the front dedicated to the study of gentrification, experimental urban design, radical gardening, sustainable design, and alternative social systems and energies. The coach also has a worm farm that is used to recycle organic waste, and a photocopier and computer powered by solar energy. More than being interested in the vehicle in itself, Norman understands *Geocruiser* as a device that serves as a frame through which the content is displayed: the uses of public space and the history of agrarian experiments,

<sup>38</sup> TUE GREENFORT, *Erdglas: Natur und Andere Städtische Täuschungen* (exhibition catalogue), Berlin, Berlinische Galerie, 2013.

<sup>39</sup> Nils Norman, interview with Stephanie Smith, in *Beyond Green: Toward a Sustainable Art*, p. 91.

of the economy, and of communal housing in Europe and the United States. As he explains in an interview for *Artforum* with Jennifer Allen:

Projects like the *Geocruiser* [...] are specific to the idea of public sculpture, which is a more abstract and complicated discursive space than those of the museum or the gallery. I'm also very interested in autonomous spaces — what the Danish artist Jakob Jakobsen calls parallel institutions — that can be used to develop more complicated, multiple practices around context and site-specificity.<sup>40</sup>

Without doubt, the most outstanding of Nils Norman's projects, through which he was able to promote a model of community governed by ecological sustainability, is *Edible Park*, which was inaugurated in 2011 in an area called Nieuw Binckhorst in The Hague, in the Netherlands. This public and open-air project in development is influenced by socio-ecological ideas about permaculture and represents a research laboratory about sustainable urban planning, agricultural biodiversity, the production of locality, and experimental collective practices. The research centre is housed in a passive solar house designed by Norman himself and the Dutch architect Michael Post, which takes its references from a domestic typology of a circular ground plan constructed mainly from wood and other materials by Tony Wrench and Jane Faith at the end of the 1990s near Newport (Wales). Inspired by utopian practices in communal agriculture, which have deep roots in the England of the seventeenth century, and encompassing even anarchist practices from the 1960s, the self-sufficient social model promoted by *Edible Park* points to a transformation of social, political, and economic relations, asking "if it is possible to collectively develop a public space that bucks the dominant trend towards the privatisation of everything — a space that is not surveilled [sic] or designed to control consumers".<sup>41</sup> More than offering a simple practice of ecological gardening, as T.J. Demos highlights, Norman's project "offers an experimental approach to agro-social construction: a test case in how to think differently about the link between ecology and economy".<sup>42</sup>

40 Nils Norman, interview with Jennifer Allen, "Utopia Now! Face to Face: The Art of Nils Norman", in *Artforum* (January 2002). Available at <http://artforum.com> (consulted 30 January 2015).

41 Nils NORMAN, "Utopia — It's Here, If Not Now". Available at [www.dismalgarden.com/collaboration/edible-park-permacultuur-centrum-den-haag](http://www.dismalgarden.com/collaboration/edible-park-permacultuur-centrum-den-haag) (consulted 10 January 2015).

42 T. J. DEMOS, "Art After Nature: The Post-Natural Condition", in *Artforum* (vol. 50, no. 8, April 2012, p. 197).

After a period devoted to generative systems (the 1970s) and light paintings (1980s), the multimedia artist **Marisa González** (Bilbao, 1945) combines her interest in memory and feminism with that of industrial archaeology, recycling, and ecology which she incorporates in works made between 1996 and 2006, a period which coincides with the controversy about the construction of the nuclear power station at Lemóniz. In the show *Marisa González. Registros domésticos* (2015),<sup>43</sup> the artist presented three essential pieces of this series: the video installation *La Fábrica*, (2000), the installation of objects and documents *Nuclear Lemóniz* (2003-2004), and the video *Siderurgia Arcelor* (2007-2014). Presented in 2000 in the Fundación Telefónica in Madrid, the *La Fábrica* installation presented a record of the dismantling and destruction of a bread factory, built in 1898, and presented the social and economic history of the industry in the Basque Country.<sup>44</sup> The same methodology was repeated in a new video installation, *Nuclear Lemóniz*, which shows a direct relationship with the recent historical past: the Franco dictatorship, the murders by ETA, and various developments with the nuclear moratorium. And, as happened with another later work, *Siderurgia Arcelor*, technology became the instrument in which the documentary value of the buildings cohabited with experiences related to the biography of the artist that “gave rise to a solemnity of almost sacred subtleties”.<sup>45</sup>

For his part, **Ibon Aranberri** (Itziar-Deba, 1969) employs different disciplines, diluting the borders between sculpture, design, cartography, and information in an artistic praxis through which he constructs stories — always from action — that reflect on the tensions between the notion of landscape, history, and language, shattering the ideological charge that links them. These stories, their author claims, move from artistic representation towards the public and from the public towards art, and he uses them to generate situations and spaces of experience.<sup>46</sup> Aranberri’s references are found both in Basque sculpture and in the process experiences of the 1970s and, in particular, in the work of Robert Smithson. His projects are made in a range of media among which one can highlight interventions on architecture and on landscape, with which he

43 Rocío de la VILLA (ed.), *Marisa González: Registros domesticados* (exhibition catalogue), Madrid, Tabacalera Promoción del Arte, 19 February–12 April 2015.

44 Nekane ARAMBURU, “Las sombras de las fábricas son alargadas”, in *Marisa González: Registros domesticados*, p. 79.

45 Nekane ARAMBURU, “Las sombras de las fábricas son alargadas”, p. 79.

46 “Conversación Ibon Aranberri y Nuria Enguita: Desplazamientos en el Paisaje. Monumento versus información”, UNIA arteypensamiento, multimedia record. Available at <https://vimeo.com/114248048> (consulted 13 March 2015).

seeks to recode places that are charged with symbolism. As a paradigm of this type of artistic practice, in 2003, Aranberri carried out an action that consisted of covering the entrance to the archaeological site of Iritegui in Oñati (Guipúzcoa) with a metal sheet that would allow access — via an opening at the top — only to the colony of a species of bat in danger of extinction. The project continued for the following five years, during which Aranberri gathered photographs and archaeological documentation about the cave which, together with the audiovisual record of the action, comprise the installation entitled (*Ir. T. n.º 513*) *zuloa. Extended Repertory* (2003-2007).

His project started in 2000, *Diseño de nuestro desarrollo, Ría y acantilado* [Design for our Development, Estuary and Cliff] (2000-2005), seeks a constant confrontation between the industrial and the cultural, taking as its axis the nuclear power station of Lemóniz, which was never brought into operation but which generated a fierce social conflict that turned it into a symbol of resistance or into a ruin from a chapter of an irreparable history. The project, which seeks to relocate the controversial station on the map, was started at a time when the city of Bilbao was debating between the end of its industrial model, represented by the nuclear power station, and the model of the post-industrial city, the city of services and entertainment, symbolised by the Guggenheim Museum. The confrontation is staged both in a slideshow or changing archive of industrial spaces and in the sculptural presence (a good part of his work is presented in the form of mutant sculpture) of two models which, like a mirage, illustrate the trauma of two failed constructions: one speaks to us of the stage of Lemóniz as a disaster site and the other of a cultural project by Néstor Basterrechea that was never realised.

In 2007, Aranberri took part in Documenta 12 in Kassel with two projects. On the one hand, *Política Hidráulica* (2004-2010) — impossible archive or apocalyptic landscape, depending on how one views it — which was made up of a set of 98 aerial photographs taken over seven years in reservoirs, electricity stations, and wetlands. The project's visual reference point is the industrial documentalism of the 1950s, which fed the propaganda of industrial modernism, and the hydraulic politics of a period covering the 1930s to the 1950s and their effect on the geography of the Basque Country and beyond, providing another perspective. As a second project Aranberri presented *Exercises on the North Side* (2004-2007), a 16mm film shot in an amateur fashion where the centre stage was occupied by mountains, which one can associate with the archetypal condition or the cliché of those narrative techniques that were established over the course of time, by means of signs, in the recognition of the landscape by individuals.

*Mar del Pirineo* [The Sea of the Pyrenees] (2006) is an installation that combines photographs, graphics, and a model that portrays in an vertical view the orographic profile of the Yesa reservoir (Huesca-Navarra), representing it with the curves of an inverted relief map — constructed in negative — subverting the cartographer's function of recording forms to give him or her the capacity to reproduce future fictions. The project puts itself forward as a documentary archive understood in a future-oriented way, “where recorded past and projected future coexist in a narrative suspended in an unstable and inert way in the objective and continuous present of the exhibition space”.<sup>47</sup> And as shown by new exercises in historical deconstruction — such as *Gramática de Meseta* [Grammar of the Plateau] of 2010, a metaphorical journey of a funerary stele from a Roman necropolis to its dismantling in the context of industrial architecture, or *Found Dead* (2007) — the local is again dissolved in the abstract-symbolic to proceed to an anti-rhetorical exercise in the creation of counter-monuments where the public mixes with the private and history criss-crosses in a parallax with the synchronisation of the most immediate present.<sup>48</sup>

A founder, together with Rubén Suárez and Javier Palacios of ECOndos,<sup>49</sup> **Lorena Lozano** (1975) combines different methodologies and knowledge coming from art, science, and education in an equation that tends to generate collaborative research processes and intervention in the urban and rural space, through which she reflects on questions concerning the perception of nature and the landscape, and their mediation and representation. In this sense, nature in her work is in line with Guattari's concepts in that her practice is rooted in three ecological registers — namely, the environment, social relationships, and human subjectivity. It could be said that the difficult generic affiliation of her work responds to her desire to understand nature as a social category, revealing in this way the impossibility of continuing to consider the concepts of nature-culture as self-contained compartments that are in perpetual conflict.

Throughout 2011 and 2012 Lozano developed — coordinated by the curators Pedro Soler and Benjamin Weil — the *EcoLab* at the LABoral Centre of Art and Industrial Creation in Gijón, a transdisciplinary laboratory of experimentation in which she investigated the intersection of open-source electron-

47 Miren JAIO, “Figura fora de Camp”, in *Ibon Aranberri: Organigrama* (exhibition catalogue), Barcelona, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 28 January–15 May 2011, p. 15.

48 On Ibon Aranberri see Joseba ZULAIKA, “Fetishes and Black Holes”, in *No Trees Damaged* (exhibition catalogue), Bilbao, Rekalde, 2004, pp. 63–70.

49 Available at <http://econodos.net/> (consulted 10 March 2015).

ics, art, and ecology, through three strands (training, research, and production), with which to try to “contribute to creating subjectivities and dynamics of relation with the biosphere and its ecosystems from the implementation of eco-technologies (high-tech and low-tech)”.<sup>50</sup> In the context of the same project, a new work stands out — *Patio sur: narrativas de un no-jardin* [South patio: narratives of a non-garden] — which visualises the stories and secrets of this forgotten entropic place, by means of the inventory of its biodiversity and a map of the conditions of this particular ecosystem through networked sensors for temperature, light, and humidity. The interpretation of these data allows the generation of the narratives of this non-garden in the analysis of its natural, cultural, and spatial dimensions. Starting from this first recognition of the territory and respecting the project’s willingness to regenerate the biotope through the premises of the permaculture, the work team later developed a series of collaborations with artists and collectives such as Cova dos Ratos of Vigo, Refarm the City, Zoohaus, and Susanna Tesconi.

Out of this experience emerged *Herbarium* (2013), a project that proposed an approach to the forms of understanding and interpreting the human-biosphere relationship through science, art, and popular knowledge. The project was shaped in laboratories, learning environments, and knowledge archives in which the artists worked with activists and citizens in urban contexts or in artistic institutions, establishing strategies of cultural representation linked to environmental reality and virtuality and reconstructing forms of preserving and managing the commons.<sup>51</sup>

## By way of conclusion

As Irmgard Emmelhainz argues, the Anthropocene has not involved a new image of the world but a radical change in the conditions of visibility as well as the transformation of the world into images. These developments have had both epistemological and phenomenological consequences: while images now

50 Lorena LOZANO, *ecoLAB o el arte de domesticar los territorios*. Available at <http://laboralcentrodearte.uoc.edu/?p=2063> (consulted 15 March 2015). See also “Biodiversity in the Multifaceted Uncertainty of the Knowledge Economy: The case of ecoLAB”, in *Plastik Art & Science* (No. 4, 2014). Available at <http://art-science.univ-paris1.fr/plastik/document.php?id=850> (consulted 13 March 2015).

51 See Lorena LOZANO, “Netgarden: Art, Nature & Society”, intervention in the context of the first Art Matters International Conference, organised by the research group Arte, Arquitectura y Sociedad Digital and the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya. Available at <http://artmattersconference.com/2014/11/21/netgarden-art-nature-society/> (consulted 14 March 2015).

participate in the formation of worlds, they have become forms of thought that constitute a new type of knowledge based on visual thinking and, because of this, dependent on perception, demanding the development of an optical mind. And, under these conditions, the Anthropocene would be dominated by a certain dislocation. The current fragmentation of socio-political movements testifies that we lack the fundamentals on which to base politics, our life in community, and our relationship with the environment. In this context, argues Emmelhainz, criticality has become a problem which provokes many questions: How can we redefine subjectivity beyond its assumption by the modes of governance of accelerated and tautological forms of vision and communicative capitalism? How can we transform our relationship with the indeterminacy of deterritorialisation and the multiplicity of divergent points of view in order to provide a sense of place, giving way to the possibility of collective autonomous subjectivation and a new sense of politics and of the image?<sup>52</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Irmgard EMMELHAINZ, “Condiciones de visualidad bajo el Antropoceno y las imágenes que están por venir”, in *Domingo Festín Canibal* (5 April 2015). This essay was originally published in *e-flux* (no. 63, March 2015). Available at [e-flux.com/journal/conditions-of-visibility-under-the-anthropocene-and-images-of-the-anthropocene-to-come/](http://e-flux.com/journal/conditions-of-visibility-under-the-anthropocene-and-images-of-the-anthropocene-to-come/) (consulted 4 April 2015). A version of the essay was published in Heather DAVIS and Etienne TURPIN (eds.), *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*, London, Open Humanities Press, 2015.

# 3

## THE ETHNOGRAPHIC TURN



## Ethnography as a methodological discipline of artistic creation

In the displacement towards the contextual that was consolidated through the eruption of the postcolonial paradigm, it makes sense to use concepts that seemed to have been permanently banished or anathematised because of the bad way they were used in the context of colonial and modern anthropology. We would talk of a return of a certain pseudo-ethnographic rhetoric in numerous contemporary artistic manifestations that, through their methodology and textual practices, put themselves forward as an optimal instrument to represent an otherness and to give a clear commitment and critical testimony to the works.

In effect, in recent years there has been a growing interest in a reformulation of the ethnographic project, which we will define as a diverse way of thinking and writing about culture from the point of view of participant observation, beyond the empirical research in which it emerged, united with its interest in the exotic. Hence the need to resort to fieldwork understood not only as a method but also as an attitude that competes with both the aesthetic and the ethical.<sup>1</sup> In this sense, many contemporary artistic projects of an ethnographic nature are related both to questions of collective trauma and to aspects tied to identity and difference between people and places in a globalised world.

As Miwon Kwon argues, ethnography has become a dominant methodological model in the contemporary academic and artistic context, affecting the development of a new historicism, and also cultural studies and artistic projects, which can be considered almost anthropological.<sup>2</sup> Removed from anthro-

1 See Neni PANOURGIÁ and George E. MARCUS (eds.), *Ethnographica Moralia: Experiments in Interpretive Anthropology*, New York, Forham University Press, 2008.

2 Miwon KWON, "Experience vs. Interpretation: Traces of Ethnography in the Works of Lan Tuzon and Nikki S. Lee", in Alex COLES (ed.), *Site-Specificity: The Ethnographic Turn*, London, Black Dog, 2000, p. 75.

pology in its lack of aspiration to provide a vision of the totality of human diversity and development, ethnography seems more appropriate for following the flow and the partiality of a world dominated by the fragmentary and the local written in the global context. As the anthropologist James Clifford argues:

A modern ethnography of conjunctures, constantly moving *between* cultures, does not, like its Western alter ego anthropology, aspire to survey the full range of human diversity or development. It is perpetually displaced, both regionally focused and broadly comparative, a form both of dwelling and of travel in a world where the two experiences are less and less distinct.<sup>3</sup>

In proposing this ethnographic turn both in the field of art and in theoretical discourse, we start from the basis that the work of a wide number of current creators responds to the paradigm of the artist as ethnographer, an artist who increasingly thinks less in terms of autonomous art, of form or content — or even of political relevance — and who openly exhibits relationships between people and given places, which is the objective of anthropology. This model of the artist as ethnographer implies, in Hal Foster's words,<sup>4</sup> a reformulation of the old model of the author as producer, which fed the practices of a political and activist art, and an art of resistance, as the focus of interest is no longer on the bourgeois institution of art (museum, academy, market) other social institutions but rather on questions of cultural identity that privilege cultural alterity in the context of the post-industrial and post-colonial era.

This is an artist that, beyond the internationalism and nationalism that had dominated modernity and the first postmodernity, in his or her vocation of living at the margins returns the gaze to local identities in the framework of deterritorialisation and asks if the new internationalism is the best guarantee for a new world in harmony and integration or, on the contrary, might, in a dystopic vision, annul the local differences, the traditional models of cultures, which would involve a greater control by the structures of power.

Why this particular ascendancy of the ethnographic turn among important contemporary artistic practices? What are the socio-economic and political ramifications of this ascendancy? What is it that unites artists as diverse as Renée Green, Fred Wilson, Sophie Calle, Lothar Baumgarten, Mark Dion,

3 James CLIFFORD, *The Predicament of Culture*, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 12.

4 Hal FOSTER, "The Artist as Ethnographer", in *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, The MIT Press, 1996, pp. 176-177..

Antoni Muntadas, Kutluğ Ataman, Hannah Collins, Jordi Colomer, Antoni Abad, Francis Alÿs, Santiago Sierra, and Rogelio López Cuenca? And how does each of them resolve some of the key dilemmas of ethnography: ethnographic authority and artistic authorship? We would speak first of all of artists who use *linguas francas* forged in modernity (minimalism, *povera*, conceptualism), as well as any instrumental medium (from video to photography passing through installation, audiovisual media, etc.), artists who concentrate their resources in the narrative potential (from makers of objects they become progenitors of meanings) and who displace interest in language, style, and beauty onto that of place — and this not in an abstract plane but specific and localised. Hence the resort to a renewed concept of site specificity from a long tradition in post-minimalist practices — from Richard Serra to Krzysztof Wodiczko, passing through Hans Haacke — which does not imply so much a physical or literal place as a discursive, virtual place, which at the same time presents itself as a field of knowledge and as a zone of cultural exchange, a concept of place connected as much with Marc Augé's concept of "no place"<sup>5</sup> as with the heterotopic spaces of Michel Foucault.<sup>6</sup> We would talk also of artists (with examples such as Kutluğ Ataman, Walid Raad, Jayce Salloum, and Akram Zaatari) interested in subjects such as the journey, memory, migration, identity, and the crisis in representation, and, in general, with work that emphasises the critical discourses that ethnography has been developing since the emergence of the crisis of representation in anthropology and the rise of post-colonialism. And, in this sense, artists and anthropologists share a series of practices that point to similar ethical questions, to the extent that each learns from the other's respective field methods.

However, the located stories and specific places to which we have alluded acquire their full meaning framed within a renewed ethnographic context, specifically that of postmodern ethnography, as formulated by James Clifford. In *The Predicament of Culture*,<sup>7</sup> Clifford reformulates some of ethnography's classic concepts — participant observation, fieldwork, and ethnographic authority — through an emphasis on experience (empathy) and interpretation, which leads us to speak of the ethnographic allegory that converts the ethnog-

5 Marc AUGÉ, *Los no lugares: Espacios del anonimato: Una antropología de la sobremodernidad*, Barcelona, Gedisa, 2001.

6 We refer to Michel Foucault's text "Des espaces autres", a lecture given at the Cercle d'Études architecturales (Paris, 14 March 1967). We have consulted the Spanish edition, "Espacios diferentes", in Michel FOUCAULT, *Obras esenciales*, vol. III, *Estética, ética y hermenéutica* (introduced and edited by Ángel Gabilondo), Barcelona, Paidós, 1999, pp. 431-441.

7 James CLIFFORD, *The Predicament of Culture*, p. 24.

rapher into a literary interpreter, underlying his inventive *poiesis* and opening the way to dialogue and polyphony, beyond description and documentation.

In the text “On Ethnographic Allegory”, James Clifford distinguishes the classic or colonial ethnographic model, identified with the savage or pastoral paradigm of the classic postcolonial or postmodern model. The savage or pastoral paradigm embraces the myth of primitivism and is characteristic of the true structure of ethnographic representation. This paradigm would, though, be a denial of contemporaneity that is an inherent part of the forms of ethnographic representation. Entirely the contrary of what happens in the postcolonial context, in which resistance to the pastoral paradigm does not imply an abandoning of their allegorical structure but basically an opening to different stories,<sup>8</sup> both the voices of the colonised and the various forms of subjectivity articulated through texts that can be described as autoethnographies and indigenous ethnographies. In this case, we would speak not from the point of view of a teleological historiography or of progress, in which the primitive “other” represents the childhood of civilisation, but from a perspective that understands history as a series of dissimilar moments that are not necessarily related and in line with a discontinuous focus that is close to the postmodern paradigm.

To challenge this pastoral paradigm in the interest of a postmodern ethnography, Clifford points to the ethnographic allegory and the need to direct attention towards cultural description, which until recently had been minimised. Following Clifford, a postmodern ethnography would be a complex text consisting of fragments of discourse that tries to evoke both in the mind of the reader and in that of the writer a fantastic element on the basis of the quotidian world with the aim of provoking an aesthetic integration with therapeutic effects. In a word, we could speak of poetics not in its textual form but in its return to the original context that, thanks to its breaking from everyday speech, evokes memories of the ethos of the community and incites listeners to act ethically. And it is thus, following Clifford, that postmodern ethnography tries to recreate textually this spiral of a kind of poetic and ritual action, in a process in which, after dematerialising common reality, it resorts to fantasy to end up returning to the common world, transformed, renewed, and made sacred. Postmodern ethnography, more than being a new starting point, is based on a return to the ethical dimension of all discourse, as is apparent

8 James CLIFFORD, “On Ethnographic Allegory”, in James CLIFFORD and George E. MARCUS (eds.), *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1986, p. 118.

from the old meaning of family in terms of *ethos*, *ethnos* and ethics. Postmodern ethnography, then, privileges the discourse over the text, dialogue over monologue, and emphasises the co-operative and collaborative nature of the ethnographic situation in contrast with the authority of the transcendental observer. In fact, it rejects the ideology of the observer-observed and, as a result, generates a discourse based on dialogue and a project of co-operation derived from a polyphonic text.<sup>9</sup>

## The place and its specificity

One of the most striking aspects of the ethnographic discourse is the importance given to the concept of place, which is not only a physical, literal, and geographic place, but also a functional place or — in other words — an informational place. “The functional site,” claims James Mayer:

Is a process, an operation occurring between sites, a mapping of institutional and textual filiations and the bodies that move between them [we refer to the figure of the artist]. It is an informational site, a locus of overlap of text, photographs and video recordings, physical places and things: an allegorical site, to recall Craig Owen’s term. The word is no longer an obdurate movement, a chain of meanings devoid of a particular focus.<sup>10</sup>

The place to which we refer is no longer so much a map as an itinerary, a fragmentary sequence of actions and events through spaces or, as M. Kwon argues, a nomadic narrative whose trajectory would be articulated by the passage of the artist: “...structured as transitive experiences, one thing after another, and not in synchronic simultaneity, this transformation of the site textualizes spaces and spatializes discourses.”<sup>11</sup> Hence the concept of site specificity, a concept with a long history in the art of the second half of the twentieth century (Haacke, Buren, Smithson, Serra, Wodiczko) which takes on new nuances and a new dimension in the framework of the ethnographic turn. We could define the specificity of the site as that work which articulates and defines itself through properties, qualities, or meanings produced by the specific relationship between

9 James CLIFFORD, “On Ethnographic Allegory”, pp. 126-127.

10 James MEYER, “The Functional Site”, in *Documents* (no. 7, Autumn 1996, p. 20).

11 Miwon KWON, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, The MIT Press, 2002, p. 29.

an object or event and the position which it occupies. It is, then, about accepting that the meanings of the work can be affected by its local position, by the position of which it forms part:

To “read” the sign is to *have located* the signifier, to have recognised its place within the semiotic system. One can go on from this to argue that the location, in reading, of an image, object, or event, its positioning in relation to political, aesthetic, geographical, institutional, or other discourses, all inform what “it” can be said to *be*.<sup>12</sup>

James Clifford points to the connection of the ethnographic approach with site specificity in the world of art. He says they are two ways of displacing the established centres of production and artistic-cultural exhibition in the framework of contexts of complex connectivity.<sup>13</sup> The site thus extends its primary condition as a locational and physical space and invades other territories such as the ethnic, the historic, the political, and the social with the aim of redefining the public role of art and artists. This expanded concept of place thus includes a wide spectrum of disciplines that range from anthropology, sociology, literature, psychology, cultural history, architecture, and urbanism to political theory and contribute to diversifying the site and justifying its discursive function.<sup>14</sup> This would explain the interest of many artists — including Lothar Baumgarten, Renée Green, Jimmie Durham, and Fred Wilson — in linking each place chosen for their artistic projects with questions derived from the legacy of colonialism, slavery racism, and the ethnographic tradition.

## The artist as ethnographer

One of the characteristics that defines the paradigm of the artist as ethnographer or as anthropologist (in fact the two postures, one more on the theoretical plane and other more on the practical level, are concentrated into a single

<sup>12</sup> See Nick KAYE, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation*, London and New York, Routledge, 2000, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> “An Ethnographer in the Field: James Clifford Interview”, in Alex COLES (ed.), *Site-Specificity: The Ethnographic Turn*, p. 59.

<sup>14</sup> Miwon KWON, “One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity”, in *October* (no. 80, Spring 1997, pp. 92–93).

posture)<sup>15</sup> is their interdisciplinary working method, beyond the single discourses of the textual model that considers anthropology to be a text. A type of work that not only applies to the techniques deployed (photography, video, audiovisual media, sculpture, or object) but also to the way of putting forward new theoretical and methodological perspectives that contribute dynamic results, which encourage the spectator to abandon passive and complacent reception in what we would define as a new form of cultural activism.

The work of the artist as ethnographer would have to be integrated within the framework of a visual anthropology,<sup>16</sup> a new field within anthropology that refers both to the critical analysis of visual methods of documentation and to visual products of the cultures that are the object of study. And despite initial contacts during the 1970s with film and television as methods of documentation, in recent years visual anthropology has displaced its interest towards a wider field of visual systems of knowledge. In this sense, the relationship of visual anthropology to the history of art is not different from that established between the history of art and visual studies. What is important is the process of cultural and social reproduction, and the study of the properties of visual systems: how things are seen and how we understand what we see.<sup>17</sup>

It is from this perspective that the model of the author as producer formulated by Walter Benjamin in the 1930s as a response to the aestheticisation of culture in a Europe threatened by fascism and Nazism<sup>18</sup> — a model which nurtured practices of political, activist, and resistance art in the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s — lived alongside another model of the artist, the artist as ethnographer. An artist fundamentally concerned with questions of identity, of cultural otherness, (the presence of the “other” is always there, the cultural, ethnic, oppressed, subaltern, or subcultural other) who is conscious of the fact of living at the borders, in transitional places where the concepts of beyond and among are imposed. According to the postcolonial theoretician Homi Bhabha, “the beyond is not a horizon that leaves the past behind but a transit zone (a crossing) where past and present, difference and otherness, out-

15 One should point to the etymological differences between anthropology and ethnology. While anthropology is the science of the universal man (*anthropos*), ethnography is the description (from field-work) of an ethnic group (*ethnos*), which is to say, of a people or a society.

16 For a more extensive understanding of this subdiscipline, see Marcus BANKS and Howard MORPHY (eds.), *Rethinking Visual Anthropology*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1997.

17 Marcus BANKS and Howard MORPHY (eds.), *Rethinking Visual Anthropology*, pp. 4 and 17.

18 See “The author as producer”, a text conceived originally as a lecture for the Institute for the Study of Fascism in Paris on 27 April 1934. See Brian WALLIS (ed.), *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, New York, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984, pp. 297-309.

side and inside, inclusion and exclusion all intertwine: an interstitial, hybrid, liminal space”.<sup>19</sup>

The model of the artist as ethnographer is that of an artist who is not interested in modern internationalism<sup>20</sup> based on homogenisation and on the levelling of languages under the presence of recognised principles, or which thinks that the solution lies in nationalism or in the *genius loci* — which is to say, the reclaiming of national labels. It is rather about an artist who questions transnational models and who asks whether the new internationalism — which at first appeared as the formula that guaranteed a world full of harmony and cultural integration<sup>21</sup> — runs the risk of becoming a dystopic vision that annuls local differences and the rich diversity of autochthonous cultures, with consequent homogenisation and a greater control on the part of hegemonic power structures.

This is an artist who does not believe in formal progress, in style, but who — in place of the pluralism and eclecticism of the 1980s and 1990s — takes advantage of the *linguas francas* of the latest modernity (such as minimalism, the conceptual, pop, narrative photography) and focuses all his or her resources on the potential narrative which makes art alive again (after wrongly being considered dead from the perspective of ruptures and fads) through stories — not great stories but situated stories, localised stories or, in other words, local stories. Such artists ignores the density of historical time (of diachronic, temporal journeys) and chooses a space, a site, enters into its culture, learns its language, maps the site, and conceives their project in order to move onto the next one, in which the cycle is repeated. For this reason, and following Mikon Kwon, we could speak of the artist not as a “maker of aesthetic objects”<sup>22</sup> (assuming the end of the production-reproduction phase, and even simulation) but as a progenitor of meaning, a facilitator (narrator, educator, co-ordinator, interviewer) who establishes a dialogue with a place, a discourse,

19 “To evoke this ‘beyond’, I refer to the exploration made by Roland Barthes of the cultural space that is ‘outside the phrase’,” argues Homi Bhabha, “In *The Pleasure of the Text*, I find a subtle suggestion that beyond theory one does not find precisely its opposition, theory/practice, but an ‘outside’, which places the articulation of both (theory and practice, language and politics) in a productive relationships similar to the Derridean notion of identity.” See Homi K. BHABHA, *The Location of Culture*, p. 44.

20 This model of the artist would no longer be interested in modern internationalism, which had dominated the space of modernity and according to which the peripheral and diasporic artist renounced all local elements to reduce the distances that separated him or her from the art generated and produced in the great capitals of the art world (New York-Paris).

21 Jean FISHER (ed.), *Global Visions: Towards a New Internationalism in the Visual Arts*, London, Kala Press, 1994, p. 53.

22 Miwon KWON, “One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity”, p. 103.

or a particular identity. However, as Hal Foster indicates in the text “The artist as ethnographer,”<sup>23</sup> the paradigm of the artist as ethnographer should be questioned because of the danger of ideological patronage (in relations between the artist and the other), for its low levels of reflexivity, for the maintenance of the ethnographic authority (a certain arrogant position towards the other), and for a false idea of political solidarity that leads to an ideal, almost ludic, situation of reductive over-identification close to the exotic and which could even result in its alienation (in which the initial xenophilia ends up becoming xenophobia). Foster also complains that the horizontal or spatial mode of working that belongs to the artist as ethnographer forgets the vertical or temporal axis, with all that this implies in terms of abandoning historical time and working in parallax. And if in the model of the author as producer, the vertical and horizontal axes are in tension, in a productive tension — ideally co-ordinated, advancing together, with the past and present in parallax, according to Foster — in the model of the artist as ethnographer, the vertical lines seem to have been lost to the benefit of the horizontal ones. Foster says that, faced with the dangers of too much or too little distance, he has opted for parallax work that tries to “frame the framer as he or she frames the other”.<sup>24</sup>

## Exhibitions with an ethnographic bias

After the show *Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*,<sup>25</sup> considered a clear illustration of the formalist agenda of Western institutions, a significant number of exhibitions — especially from the first decade of the twenty-first century — sought a new convergence between artists and anthropologists on the basis of problematising the different ways of communicating the findings and points of view of ethnography based on an understanding of fieldwork from the global perspective. Leaving behind the criticisms that had been levelled at William Rubin and Kirk Varnedoe — the main figures responsible for *Primitivism* — which can be summarised in three points: the suppression of all difference which results in the concept of affinity and the generic use of the term tribal; the aestheticisation of non-Western

23 Hal FOSTER, “The Artist as Ethnographer”, p. 197.

24 Hal FOSTER, “The Artist as Ethnographer”, pp. 198-199.

25 *Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* (exhibition catalogue), New York, Museum of Modern Art, 27 September 1984–15 January 1985.

objects that are decontextualized (lack of author, date, context); and, finally, the relegation of all otherness to an era already passed.<sup>26</sup> To Jean-Hubert Martin's ambition, which we have already explored, to shelve all the colonialist deviation of *Primitivism*, one can add new examples of exhibitions from an ethnographic perspective such as *The Tropics. Views from Middle of the Globe* (Berlin, 2008–2009)<sup>27</sup> and *Les Maîtres du désordre* (Quai de Branly, Paris, 2012).<sup>28</sup> An authentic interaction between art and ethnography was produced at the Paris Triennale of 2012, specifically the show *Intense Proximity. An Anthology of the Near and the Far*. This exhibition, coinciding with the international symposium organised in the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris under the name *L'artiste en ethnographe*,<sup>29</sup> proposed situating the ethnographic in a contact zone between historical and contemporary systems of thought linked to the rich but polemical field of ethnography.

As Mélanie Bouteloup recognised in “Tensions in Questions”,<sup>30</sup> one of the texts of the catalogue for *Intense Proximity*, we live in a space-frontier that is shared and divided, living at the expense of frictions that animate our treatment of people, who seem at times very near and at other times very far away. This was dealt with by the Paris Triennale: the experience and complexity of living together today but without forgetting the genealogies of itineraries between the near and the far, which Mary Louise Pratt defines as contact zones,

26 Johanne LAMOUREUX, “From Form to Platform: The Politics of Representation and the Representation of Politics”, in *Art Journal* (vol. 64, no. 1, Spring 2005, p. 66).

27 *The Tropics: Views from the Middle of the Globe* (Berlin, Martin-Gropius-Bau, 12 September 2008–5 January 2009) presented 85 pieces of contemporary art together with 200 objects from the collections of the Ethnological Museum of Berlin (objects from Africa, Asia, Oceania, and tropical America) including a range embracing the premodern, the precolonial, and the contemporary in search of a non-hierarchical vision of the world.

28 The exhibition *Les Maîtres du désordre* (Paris, Musée du Quai Branly, 11 April–29 July 2012) presented, in three sections — imperfect order, mastery of chaos, and catharsis — objects, garments, and representations of the outstanding collections of anthropology together with installations by contemporary artists such as Thomas Hirschhorn, Anne Charlotte Finel, Annette Messenger, and Jean-Michel Alberola.

29 The curatorial platform *le peuple qui manque* in collaboration with the Centre Pompidou-Musée Nacional d'Art Moderne de Paris brought together artists, filmmakers, art historians, curators, and anthropologists in the symposium *L'artiste en ethnographe* (May 2012) with the aim of crossing the territories of art, anthropology, cultural criticism, and the theory of images. It tackled questions related to the archives of colonial knowledge, the history of scientific museology, regimes of authority, modes of enunciation, and experimentation with writing and the narrations of the other. Among the participants were: T. J. Demos, Joachim Koester, George Marcus, Maureen Murphy, Fred Wilson, and Trinh T. Minh-ha.

30 Mélanie BOUTELOUP, “Tensions in Questions”, in *Intense Proximity: An Anthology of the Near and the Far* (exhibition catalogue), La Triennale 2012, Paris, Palais de Tokyo, 2012, p. 37.

described as social spaces where cultures meet, collide, and confront each other, often in the context of clear and asymmetrical power relations, such as colonialism, slavery, or their consequences as they are experienced in many parts of the world.<sup>31</sup>

The artists gathered by Okwui Enwezor, the Triennale's artistic director, included Georges Adéagbo, Antoni Muntadas, Eugenio Dittborn, David Hammons, El Anatsui, Lothar Baumgarten, Chantal Akerman, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Carrie Mae Weems, Alfredo Jaar, Isaac Julien, Meschac Gaba, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Yto Barrada, Éric Baudelaire, Bouchra Khalili, Hassan Khan, and Tarek Atoui. As artist historians or artist anthropologists, they reveal what remains invisible, the blind spots in the official chronologies, the suppressed or marginalised elements, in such a way that their alternative visions of history (generally written by various hands and from a plurality of perspectives) are there to dismantle the barriers of occlusion and to rewrite history.

In this discursive line, Okwui Enwezor starts the catalogue's introductory text recalling the contribution of anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss in *Les Tristes Tropiques* (1955), where he narrates his legendary investigation in the interior of Brazil in an unusual and intertextual combination of memories, travel notes, and ethnographic methodology, under the influence of incipient structuralism. All this materialises in a new approach to ethnographic writing, based not only on fieldwork but also on leaps of mental journeys that measure the distances between the near and the far leading to a new discipline of structural anthropology as an alternative to ethnographic voyeurism. As, argues Enwezor, our own time seems to be both emblematised and traumatised by the collapse of distance, within which difference acquires its meaning. All this brings us to penetrate a zone of intense proximity, a form of uncomfortable closeness that destabilises and transforms the co-ordinates of national cultural vectors. How to understand the new face of global culture today if there are no longer exotic cultures to discover or distant places to explore? Hence the curatorial discourse of *Intense Proximity*, which leads us to questions of the type: how are proximity and distance constituted in the aftermath of colonial modernity through migration, creolisation, globalisation, and contact. Hence also the double interest in the spatial (this interaction between the near and the far) without renouncing the temporal to the extent that it refers to the re-

31 Mary Louise PRATT, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London and New York, Routledge, 2008. According to Pratt, arts that invoke this situation of temporal and spatial co-presence can be defined as autoethnography, transculturation, collaboration, collaboration, bilingualism, mediation, parody, denunciation, imaginary dialogue, and vernacular expression.

lationship between past and present, modernity and contemporaneity: the past understood as distance and the present understood as proximity.<sup>32</sup>

## The reinvention of fieldwork and other uses of the ethnographic

The analysis of an ample catalogue of work by artists from the 1990s until today shows us an artist who — far from the primitivist fantasies that characterised the pseudo-scientific beginnings (from Gauguin until the dissident surrealists Bataille and Leiris) — adopts the ethnographic method from the idea of nomadism, using their work to point to themes related to travel, memory, migration, identity, and the crisis of representation with which they position themselves critically in relation to ethnography. In incorporating ethnographic subjects into their works, these artists contribute to the type of critical discourse that ethnography developed from the emergence of the crisis of representation in anthropology and the rise of postcolonial and postfeminist thinking.<sup>33</sup>

In the field of relations between art and ethnography, one should highlight the figure of the artist whose relationship with anthropology is measured for how it uses the practice of fieldwork, defined as any kind of encounter — both material and social — with the terrain. In the symposium held at Tate Modern in London in 2003 entitled *Fieldworks: Dialogues between Artists and Anthropologists*<sup>34</sup> the practice of fieldwork was defined as a social and/or material meeting related to the field. In his lecture “The Traffic in Art and Anthropology,” George Marcus, one of the symposium’s participants, pointed out that artistic practices related to the ethnographic turn took on almost redemptive powers in the construction of a social analysis, and even went so far as to indicate that fieldwork in the area of art and theatre had managed to reinvent fieldwork in anthropology. While writing-culture-critique — as had been proposed by Clifford and Marcus himself in 1986 — encouraged the deconstruction of ethnographic narratives, Marcus claimed that the critical reflexivity of the 1980s did not restore a stereotypical vision of anthropological fieldwork:

32 Okwui ENWEZOR, “Intense Proximity: Concerning the Disappearance of Distance”, in *Intense Proximity: An Anthology of the Near and the Far*, p. 22.

33 Kris RUTTEN, An van DIENDEREN, and Roland SOETAERT, “The rhetorical turn in contemporary art and ethnography”, in *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies* (vol. 27, no. 6, 2013, pp. 627–640). Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02560046.2013.867587> (consulted 11 March 2014).

34 Haidy GEISMAR and Rebecca EMPSON, “Fieldworks: A Review”, in *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* (vol. 24, no. 1, 2004, pp. 39–50).

Malinowskian staging. In place of that, this creative period of interdisciplinary work allowed anthropological fieldwork to be re-appropriated and remythologised by other intellectual communities.

Marcus defended the need to go beyond the Malinowskian imagination, which had been considered the only method in anthropology, and presented various artistic practices of a growing and disperse global world. This included those that, using the techniques of film and theatre, could open the way to anthropologists to reinvent fundamental practices within their own discipline. And this based on new processes of collaboration and collusion that define a new politics of knowledge.

In the same line of work, and following Arnd Schneider,<sup>35</sup> we could situate the pioneering works of **Juan Downey** (Santiago de Chile, 1940 — New York, 1993), a pioneer of video art who from 1973 undertook a series of journeys to different locations of the American continent — Mexico, Guatemala, Peru, Bolivia, Chile — recording the autochthonous cultures of each community,<sup>36</sup> and of **Sharon Lochkart** (Norwood, Massachusetts, 1964), whose work *Teatro Amazonas* (1999) is based on collaboration between the artist and the anthropologists Ligia Simonian and Isabel Soares de Souza in three places in Brazil: the city of Manaus, the river Aripuana, and the regions of Apeú-Salvador.

In a line closer to Malinowskian imagination, one can highlight the work of **Lothar Baumgarten** (Rheinberg, 1943), who started to become interested in the thinking of Claude Lévi-Strauss and his reflections on the discourse between the civilised and the barbarian, or the opposition between nature and culture, towards which Baumgarten's work is also oriented. It was from the hand of Lévi-Strauss (and also from the influence of his father, an anthropologist) that he became interested in anthropology, ethnography, and above all history, tradition, and the culture of the other, understanding by other the distinct, the apart, the excluded. It was thus that he started his ethnographies of otherness in other zones of the basin of the river Rhine using films (his first film, *The Origin of the Night*, of 1973-1978, an exotic tropical voyage, is set in the Amazon jungle although it was shot in the German woods along the river Rhine)<sup>37</sup> and object

35 Arnd SCHNEIDER, "Three models of experimentation with art and ethnography", in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (vol. 14, no. 1, 2008, pp. 171-194).

36 Julieta GONZÁLEZ (ed.), *Juan Downey: El ojo pensante* (exhibition catalogue), Santiago de Chile, Sala de Arte Fundación Telefónica, 31 March-27 June 2010.

37 As Kaira Marie Cabañas claims, in this film we do not see natives, other cultures, magical rituals, or even an anthropologist. In the calculated economy which is representative of the film, the desire to visualise the other is displaced from the body towards the landscape, from the seen to the scene, in such a way that the distortion of one's voyeuristic gaze represents the complexity and contradictions of

works of an ephemeral character, works that Baumgarten always recorded in various photographic series, the most well-known of which being *Culture-Nature, Manipulated Reality* (1968-1972).

Later came other ethnographies of the jungles and other environments of South America (his eighteen-month stay, between 1978 and 1980, with the Yanomami people in the region of the high Orinoco in the Venezuelan Amazon stands out) and in other rivers distinct from the Rhine. And from these initial moments, Baumgarten also considered that the photographic camera (without excluding other media such as the film camera or the book) was best suited to make visible his experience as an explorer, revealing the fissures and the paradoxes between the civilised and the savage, between order and disorder, between the logical and the irrational.

There are several important series in photographic format in which Baumgarten documents his displacements towards the other: those that recreate in colour the tropical landscapes of *Fragmented Brazil* (a multi-projection of 480 images of Brazilian birds painted by Albert Eckhout in 1654 and drawings of the Yanomami peoples), those that visualise the complex and hybrid preindustrial North American landscape taking the railway network as the central theme, and those that recreate the search for El Dorado in the work *Montaigne. Terra Incognita* (1977-1985), in which the image lives alongside words and names.<sup>38</sup>

As can be seen in the exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, *AMERICA Invention* (1993), Baumgarten used the rotunda of the museum as a medium to inscribe the names of the places, the tribes, the languages spoken by the indigenous people, the variations in dialect, with which indigenous identity is drawn and mapped in the space-time of history. Craig Owens, in the text "Improper Names", claims that Baumgarten does not use names to evoke a vision but rather to "provide an alternative to the ethnographic project of visualising the other".<sup>39</sup> As Hal Foster argues, the theosophical structure of Frank Lloyd Wright, lacking right angles, is transformed into a terrestrial globe. In this case, however, north and south are not opposed but create a continental double helix of names.<sup>40</sup>

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the desire to see, to fix cultural difference on a containable, visible object. See Kaira Marie CABAÑAS, "See other side", in *Imago Mundi* (exhibition catalogue), Barcelona, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), 7 February-15 June 2008, p. 28.

38 Lothar Baumgarten: *Autofocus retina* (exhibition catalogue), Barcelona, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), 8 February-15 June 2008.

39 Craig OWENS, "Improper Names", in *Art in America* (vol. 74, no. 10, October 1986, pp. 126-134).

40 Hal FOSTER, "The Writing on the Wall", in *Lothar Baumgarten: AMERICA Invention*, New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1993, p. 11.

This would explain the abundance of artistic practices that start out from fieldwork as an experimental instrument to challenge the limitations of the representations of analytical anthropology. Take, for example, the work of **Trinh T. Minh-ha** (Hanoi, Vietnam, 1952), specifically her 16mm film *Reassemblage* (1982), filmed in Senegal and in which she explains that she seeks “not to speak about” but to speak “close to”. The film is a montage of fleeting images of Senegal without narration and with background music, although there are occasional declarations from the artist that provide a certain meaning to the scenes. A reworking of *Reassemblage* is offered in a new work of the 1980s, *Naked Spaces Living is Round* (1984), an ethnographic film essay in which the artist, by examining postcolonial identification and the process of the loss of power, reflects on how the impossibility of translation can affect identity and its representation.

We could cite other ethnographic artists, such as **Fred Wilson** (Bronx, New York, 1954), who describes himself as of African ancestry, native American, European, and Amerindian, and who — in works from the beginning of the 1990s — has interested himself in the traditional presentation of art and objects in natural, historical, and ethnographic museums with the aim of raising awareness of racism as an integral part of American history. In the case of *Mining the Museum* (1992), Wilson took as a point of reference the Maryland Historical Society (Baltimore) and its permanent collection to record the omissions by the museum programmes of representation of oppressed peoples in favour of the “prominent white man”. Starting with the existing collection, Wilson undertook his remodelling to highlight the history of the African-Americans and native Americans of Maryland and to use the new staging to show that the themes of colonisation and slavery can be contemplated from a different point of view.

His installation is based on the excavation and recuperation of African-American history, whose hidden fragments prompt spectators to map, in an illegible way, the territory of a cultural anthropology. This leads them to evoke events and question the history that they have been told by an institution, by confronting it with what they now understand or hear. In this sense, Wilson becomes an ethnographer or an archaeologist because his exploratory act tends to be translated in terms of a cultural narration whose story is examined with the aim of being reinterpreted. Wilson acts as an “ethnographer of the African-American communities lost, repressed, or otherwise displaced in such institutions”.<sup>41</sup>

41 Hal FOSTER, “The Artist as Ethnographer”, p. 200.

Some of the historical fragments with which the spectator is confronted are *Metalwork 1793-1880*, a juxtaposition of metallic objects placed in a vitrine next to iron handcuffs, and *Cabinet Making 1820-1960*, in which the artist places four overly decorated chairs in front of a torture cross, or seventeenth-century paintings placed next to lights. In the same way that he displays the hoods of the Ku Klux Klan in children's pushchairs.

Other ethnographic projects based on the reinvention of fieldwork tackle both questions of collective trauma and suffering and the search for notions of identity and difference among peoples and places in a globalised world. Precisely from this perspective, **Renée Green** (Cleveland, Ohio, 1959), an African-American artist with a conceptual training, has since 1992 been carrying out various projects in relation to distinct communities in which the idea of the journey, of fieldwork (the interview as the most important medium), and of place takes on a fundamental role. And always with subjects centred on questions of the African diaspora and on the politics of colour, the frameworks of power, and invisible networks through which oppression continues to live and in which she or a fiction of herself appears.

In 1991, the directors of the Worcester Art Museum of Massachusetts commissioned a project from her, *Bequest*, with a single instruction: to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the museum and to investigate the legacy of its founder Stephen Salisbury III and his colonial past. Renée Green created an installation in a conceptual format with portraits, mirrors from the museum's colonial collection, and also texts with phrases taken from nineteenth-century writers such as Edgar Allan Poe and W. E. B. Dubois (who in *The Souls of Black Folk*, of 1903, spoke of the problem of the colour-line, alluding to the fact that national borders were none other than lines of colour) in which stereotypes of whiteness and blackness were put forward projected onto a present situation and qualified as authentic fiction.

With the aim of demonstrating that eighteenth-century slavery still survives as a cultural fiction for the local tourist industry and that history is constructed in the borders between truth and fiction, Green designed another installation, *Mise-en-Scène*, presented in Clisson (in the Loire area) in 1992. In this, Renée Green investigated the wealth of Clisson which, like the neighbouring Nantes, came from a past of slave trafficking on the route to the West Indies. Green places herself in this past, specifically the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in order to choose a fictional museum of decorative arts as an exhibition site, in which she exhibited various elements of its aesthetics, such as pieces of furniture but above all *toile de Jouy*, spread across the whole room. Green also designed a floor installation with three large filing cabinets full of large-sized

cards with the names of the slave ships and the languages spoken by the Africans on board. And in the centre of the triangle of filing cabinets she placed a black box with the words *Trésor Caché*, with photographs that showed images of *fleur de lis* (royal symbol) stamped on human skin (substituting for fabric). The installation also included interviews carried out with Nantes town planners together with photographs of Nantes today which showed that, finally and behind a bourgeois and civilised appearance, Nantes-Clisson hid a history of barbarism.<sup>42</sup> Ultimately, what Green wanted was to show that the slavery of the eighteenth century survived as a cultural fiction of the local tourist industry with the aim of thereby proving that history was constructed on the borders between truth and fiction.

The artistic practice of **Mark Dion** (New Bedford, Massachusetts, 1961) from the 1980s until today concerns the representation of nature examined as it is projected by cultural institutions: the natural history museums. Natural history and its different methods of classification projected by such institutions throughout their existence constitutes the object of his investigation.

For Dion, nature is one of the most sophisticated arenas for the production of ideology, and his projects attempt to expose aspects of this production with techniques inspired by various artists and intellectuals — the wry fictional museums of Broodthaers, the site/non-site strategies of Smithson, the historical investigations of scientific discourses of Michel Foucault, and so on. For all its criticism of the ecological disasters precipitated by colonial history and postcolonial economics, his art is hardly one of disdainful critique: Dion is an avid amateur, with his own collection of insects and other curiosities often on display; his work has drawn, too, on his many trips to the tropics and elsewhere. In this manner Dion plays the naturalist and the environmentalist in ways that are both straight and sardonic. Most often his installations have taken the form of works in progress, and they exist somewhere between a site in the field, the home office of a bizarre naturalist, and a finished museum display.<sup>43</sup>

In the project *On Tropical Nature*, carried out in 1991 and shown in the Sala Mendoza gallery in Caracas, and in another project entitled *A Meter of Jungle*, produced in 1992 for the *Arté Amazonus* exhibition, the artist collects, analyses, and classifies specimens of the ecosystem (plants, insects, stones); he transfers

42 Alexander ALBERRO, “El fragmento y el flujo: sampleando la obra de Renée Green”, *cit.*, p. 31.

43 Hal FOSTER, Rosalind KRAUSS, Yve-Alain BOIS, and Benjamin H. D. BUCHLOH, *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, London, Thames & Hudson, 2004, p. 627.

them from their original context to another, that of the cultural institutions (gallery or museum). In *On Tropical Nature* Dion adopts the role of a naturalist, he collects specimens of plants and insects in a wood in Venezuela while transferring his material every day to the gallery in Caracas, which takes the form of an installation in constant alteration. Under the artist's instructions, the acquired collection is organised and reorganised each time on a table; objects such as clothes, shoes, gas lamps, chemical products, a photographic camera, and a notebook together with a wooden box on the floor "highlight the processes of these displacements and their role in the formation of scientific knowledge".<sup>44</sup> A similar representation is observed in *A Meter of Meadow* (1995), which consists of 289 black-and-white photographs of insects. As Natacha Pugnet observes by familiarising the mythical image of the explorer, mixing the figure of the colonial adventurer with that of the erudite scholar, Dion attacks conventional notions of exoticism: the jungle as a projection of our fantasies of the slave, virgin nature seems to be the place of ecological and political reputations.<sup>45</sup>

## The problematising of ethnography as a method and documentation as a genre

For other artists, the relationships between ethnography, globalisation, and geopolitics pass through a work that goes beyond pure fieldwork: they promulgate a critical transregionalism in which the region as a concept becomes a dramaturgy of power and discourse and the ethnographic gaze confronts the conflict between the expressions of a non-Western modernity and Western ideals of form, genre, and medium when representing otherness.

Thanks to video and film, questions are raised that point towards the expanded horizon of visual anthropology, such as gay and lesbian questions, the politics of diaspora, histories of oppression, of resistance, and of the criminal justice system. As Catherine Russell<sup>46</sup> points out, in the last fifteen years experimental film

44 Miwon KWON, "Unnatural Tendencies: Scientific Guises of Mark Dion", in the catalogue of the exhibition *Natural History and Other Fictions: An Exhibition by Mark Dion*, held at Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, 25 de January–31 March 1997, at Kunstverein, Hamburg, 27 June–10 August 1997, and at De Appel Foundation, Amsterdam, 29 August–19 October 1997, p. 40.

45 Natacha PUGNET, "Mark Dion: Tales of the Grotesque and the Grave", in *Mark Dion présente l'ichthyosaure, la pie et autres merveilles du monde naturel*, Marseille, Images En Manoeuvres Éditions, 2003, p. 100.

46 Catherine RUSSELL, "Another Look", in Stefan ST. LAURENT and Tam-Ca VO-VAN (eds.), *International Geographic* (exhibition catalogue), Ottawa, Galerie SAW Gallery, 30 September–13 November

and ethnographic film have diversified in a variety of media, styles, and practices, many of which insist at the same time in the documentary and the fictional. And the theories of George Marcus point in this direction, arguing that film is the most suitable medium for the deterritorialised nature of the cultural process because it makes possible the articulation of complex temporal relationships.

In **Hannah Collins** (London, 1956) the ethnographic impulse manifests in her fascination with the other, which is materialised in an intercultural dialogue in which the artist seeks to maintain a relationship of equality with those she portrays (gypsies in the case of *La Mina*, the migratory flows of the global world in *Parallel*, and two Russian families in *Current History*). The audiovisual installation *La Mina* (2001–2004) shows her interest in exploring the theme of shared exoticism or of how a society — that of the gypsies — can be constructed within another, starting from the idea that we can all be exotic to the gaze of the other. *La Mina*, filmed in 2001, offers a polyhydic portrait of the gypsy community that lives in the Barcelona district of La Mina, in which, from an initial script, what counts are the participants and their freedom to describe their experiences, sometimes alone, sometimes helped by a professional actor (Andrew Saint Clair). The projection of the work on five screens is an attempt not only to eradicate the single instant that belongs to the photographic image but also to break the continuity and frontality of the cinematographic image: all from a temporality that is beyond the passage of time, made from multiple points of view consistent with the nomadic condition of the protagonists: people from the gypsy community.

The three simultaneous projections of the audio-visual installation *Parallel* (2007) propose a new challenge: the representation of the migratory experience (African immigrants in Europe) through three protagonists — Dewa (Cameroon), Pamela (Uganda), and Constantine (Ivory Coast) — emphasising the double poetics of the image: on the one hand, legible testimonies of a history written on faces and objects and, on the other hand, pure blocks of visibility, impermeable to all search for meaning (like icons or mute sculptures without narrativity). The ambivalence brings Collins' art to one of its most original expressive resources: in making the characters of her films and her photographs speak twice — partly as mute testimonies of a condition inscribed in their features, their habits, and in the context of their lives, and partly as bearers of a secret hidden behind the image that they present to us. This same duality is repeated in the simultaneous double projection *Current Histo-*

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2004 (Ottawa, YYZ Books, 2007, pp. 11–37). Originally published in *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1999, pp. 3–25.

ry (2006) (fig. 16-17), in which the artist moves to Russia in an attempt, in her own words, to “understand this place that is so remote” so that, from there she can offer us a day in the life of a Russian family, the Chiline family, who move between Nizhni Novgorod — an old city of more than a million inhabitants located at the confluence of the Volga and Oka rivers — and Beshencevo, a village on the outskirts of this city. This initial contrast between a post-Soviet city and a pre-Soviet village highlights, in the words of Àlex Bauzà,<sup>47</sup> the existence of two times and two emotional states: on the one hand, the present time tied to the city and its promises of the future; on the other hand, time tied to tradition, to precariousness, and charged with a certain nostalgia for a past stationed between myth and history. From the fragile connections between individuals and social groups, between the city and the village, the artist takes us into another of her obsessions: the spaces of memory, in the manner of a palimpsest of



**Figures 16-17.** Hannah Collins, *Current History* (2007).

<sup>47</sup> Àlex BAUZÀ, “Hannah Collins: *Beshencevo. A Current History*”, in Anna Maria GUASCH (ed.), *La memoria del otro*, p. 94.

different times contained within a single image — real times and imagined times. And, as Hannah Collins claims in an interview with Carles Guerra:

The left screen is always the city and the right is always the village, in a way that one could think of exterior and interior. There is also a kind of common space. I see it as a space of memory, a space compressed from many different times. It is very similar to the big photographic works where what one is really seeing is beyond the limits of the image.<sup>48</sup>

One could describe as pseudo-ethnographic certain works by **Jordi Colomer** (Barcelona, 1962) to the extent that they merge the documentary and on-site fieldwork with the fictional and a sculptural-theatrical dimension that links his work to the tradition of Kantor, Beckett, Buñuel, and Godard. The video projection *En la Pampa* (2008) would be an example of a staging of fiction whose protagonists Maria and Mateo (halfway between their real and authored condition) wander through the immensity of the desert of Atacama, in the Chilean pampa, facing the unpredictable drift of a geographical edge, repeating the same questions as asked by the artist: Can one live in the desert? Can one live through fiction? As Rafa Pinilla argues:

We find ourselves in front of the staging of a fiction with the deliberate intention of highlighting this very fiction: a play that in the end would make clear to the viewer that any reality is no more than a construct in a given time and space. And the given time and space is, in *En la Pampa*, the degree zero of a time and a space: because of this, the wandering of Maria and Mateo makes it possible that they can live in their particular dream; hence their drifting through the immensity of the desert.<sup>49</sup>

In 2009, Colomer moved to one of the cities of the suburbs of Mexico, Ixtapaluca, and in the video *Avenida Ixtapaluca (Houses for Mexico)* (fig. 18-19) tackled the contradictions between the homogeneity and uniformisation of the architecture (the construction of an estate of almost identical houses) and the specific idiosyncrasies of its inhabitants, who transformed this geometrical

48 Interview with Hannah Collins by Carles Guerra, “Experiència continguda: les pel·lícules de Hannah Collins”, in *Hannah Collins: Història en curs: Pel·lícules i fotografies* (exhibition catalogue), Barcelona, Fundació La Caixa, 2008, p. 55. About Collins, see also *Hannah Collins: La revelación del tiempo* (exhibition catalogue), Bogotá, Museo de Arte de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia, September–November 2010.

49 Rafael PINILLA, “Jordi Colomer: *En la Pampa*”, in Anna Maria GUASCH (ed.), *La memoria del otro*, p. 110.

plot installing what Robert Venturi, alluding to the city of Las Vegas, called “tinglados” [open sheds] (markets, flats on top of roofs, etc.). Against a single model of life, formatted and controlled, Colomer, in his approach to the “locals”, reclaimed a triumph of anarchy over utopia: “When architecture is identified with a form of imposed power, one should act as the architect of one’s own life,” the artista declared.<sup>50</sup>

The Moroccan city of Tetuan represents a new stage for a triple approach: architectural, sociological, and poetic. An approach reflected in two video works, *Architects (Tétouan)* (2014), the result of a workshop with students of the National Architecture School of Tetuan, and *Medina Parkour* (2014), which presents the artist himself traversing the rooftops of Tetuan and evoking the practice of parkour, a discipline of French origin which consists of moving around using only the abilities of own’s own body. Moving through the envi-



**Figures 18-19.** Jordi Colomer, *Avenida Ixtapaluca (Houses for Mexico)* (2009).

<sup>50</sup> Available at [www.jordicolomer.com/index.php?lg=6&id=30&priid=36](http://www.jordicolomer.com/index.php?lg=6&id=30&priid=36) (consulted 17 April 2015).

ronment in a rapid and fluid way, leaping, climbing, and using a myriad of possibilities to thereby overcome the obstacles that derive from the action: with his juggling leaps — of an almost burlesque style — the artist proposes that this map-making body alludes to the walls that mark and separate properties and territories and to his undrawing of the lines between domestic privacy and the public space.

**Josep-Maria Martín** (Ceuta, 1961) seeks to create intervention strategies in structures and specific contexts, looking for cracks in social and personal systems. Insisting in the processes of research, participation, implication, and negotiation, Martín allows, in the form of a renewed ethnography, people who are involved in his projects to become an active part of them. Hence his collaboration with other professionals and/or citizens in the street, such as artists, writers, social workers, designers, doctors, nurses, researchers, etc.

Most of his works start with research that implies participative processes that generate negotiations and common actions. In the exhibition *Of Bridges & Borders*,<sup>51</sup> Martín started the project *El viaje de Bamba* which has been translated into various formats. After nine months of research and fieldwork involving interviews with more than forty professionals in the fields of anthropology, sociology, medicine, architecture, psychology, urbanism, and social work, together with key people of the Madrid district of Lavapiés, this project took shape in the form of the video installation *La casa digestiva para Lavapiés* (2010-2011). This is based on a central character, the Senegalese citizen Mouhamadou Bamba Diop, who lived together with another sixteen undocumented compatriots in a flat in this area of Madrid, and presents a reflection on the situation of immigrants, including their past (which involved travelling in a cayuco), and their hopes for the future.

A new example of participative processes of research and analysis in specific contexts is shown in a new work, *Made in Chile* (2010), made for the *Dislocación*<sup>52</sup> exhibition (Santiago de Chile), a work about emigration, the economy,

<sup>51</sup> *Of Bridges & Borders*, vol. I, is a project in book format that brings together the work of artists and writers who cover the period between the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and 2009, seeking to reflect a contemporary global memory in a work of free art with more bridges than borders. It included contributions from Pedro Donoso, Andrea Giunta, Josep-Maria Martín, Cuauhtémoc Medina, Carsten Nicola, and Martí Peran. The text was published in the collection *Anthologies & Art Theory* (Zurich, JRP Ringier, 2009). This publication was followed by two exhibitions, one in Buenos Aires (Fundación Proa, 2011) and the second in Valparaíso (2013).

<sup>52</sup> Ingrid WILDI (ed.), *Dislocación: Localización Cultural e Identidad en Tiempos de Globalización* (exhibition catalogue), Santiago de Chile, 2 September–15 November 2010, and Bern (Switzerland), 18 March–19 June 2011.

and wealth creation that was the fruit of a multidisciplinary work that involved the convergence of the figures of the artist, the architect, the social worker, and the politician. After a lengthy on-site research process — which included interviews and meetings with professionals, artists, businesses, and charitable and state institutions — Martin proposed creating a prototype or model of social housing in a local community (the Chipana-Iquique cove) which both received and welcomed him and also resisted him — remaining in oscillation, indicating the instability of the connection and accentuating the frustration between the space of art and that of daily life. What is it to be Chilean? Can we create wealth with identity? What is quality of life? Do we subsist or live? Migrate? In which habitat, which economy? What is wealth creation? These were some of the questions that the artist asked in the video *Made in Chile* in his desire to design a habitat prototype (based on modules of octagonal rooms) with the aim of integrating individuals in the community in their double dimension, family and socio-economic. A proposal of economy of space close to an architecture of poverty that obeys the laws of what could be called an “architecture of precariousness.” As Fernando Balcells argues:

The art of Josep-Maria Martín opens a dialogue based on ambushing innocence. Its paradox is the inoffensive-offensive character of the innocent look which is seen and heard for the first time. In the composition of explorer, polytechnic lecturer, liaison officer, and juggler, the artistic character moves between institutions and authorities revolving around tolerance, immunity, and the expectations that clothe his figure.<sup>53</sup>

53 Fernando BALCELLS, “Josep-Maria Martín: *Made in Chile*”, in Ingrid WILDI (ed.), *Dislocación: Localización Cultural e Identidad en Tiempos de Globalización*, p. 59.

# 4

## THE TRANSLATION TURN



Within the general context of the intercultural approach as a project that underlies all cultural exchange, a prominent place in the framework of global cultural and visual practices is occupied by translation,<sup>1</sup> viewed as an instrument for creating spaces of a transversal understanding between distinct media (thus it is necessary to resort frequently to the term intermedial translation)<sup>2</sup> and between different cultures, and as a paradoxical concept in that it seeks understanding at the same time as indicating the potential of the untranslatable. A translation that should not be understood as a medium or a linguistic function (as occurred in linguistic and ethnographic texts of the 1930s and 1940s) but as a cultural and political instrument that not only allows the hegemonic incorporation of the other but also shows the potentiality of resistance of the process of translation itself.

## Towards an epistemology of translation

Viewed as a medium for incorporating the voice of difference, translation would take up the reflections provided by Walter Benjamin on the subject in his 1923 essay “The task of the translator” (*Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers*),<sup>3</sup> in the

<sup>1</sup> Mieke Bal and Joanne Morra in “Acts of Translation” show how art historians, cultural theorists, philosophers, and psychoanalysts welcome contemporary theories of translation as an instrument to favour the crossing of borders between different media and cultures in an international context. See *Journal of Visual Culture* (vol. 6, no. 1, April 2007, pp. 5-156).

<sup>2</sup> Intermedial translation refers to the process of translation that uses different media, working with discourses and practices of intertextuality and interdisciplinarity, which favours displacement through diverse resources, genres, bodies of knowledge, and subjects. More specifically, this intermedial translation alludes to the marginal, to the gaps, cracks, and contradictions of working in the interstices of these diverse borders. See Mieke BAL and Joanne MORRA, “Acts of Translation”, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Walter BENJAMIN, “The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire’s *Tableaux parisiens*”, in Hannah ARENDT (ed.), *Illuminations*, London, Fontana Press, 1992 (1955), pp. 70-82. For Benjamin, translation is a mode of writing that works against codification, imitation,

sense of understanding the process of translation as a mode of writing that goes beyond codification, imitation, derivation, or ecstasy. The function of translation, as a philosophy of language, is not to serve the original but to liberate its potential, which resides precisely in that which resists translation. It is this way of understanding translation as a resistance to reading that allows Walter Benjamin to link translation etymologically with metaphor, as both share the same root as transfer or crossing borders. That would explain the growing interest by theorists of various disciplines (anthropology, literary theory, film studies, visual culture, cultural studies, visual arts) in this new concept of translation that is close to mobility and the theory of difference.

This way of understanding translation as the other life of the original or also from the impossibility of creating a mirror image of this original as translation becomes a necessary and impossible task was followed by Jacques Derrida. In the essay “La différance” (1968) Derrida saw translation as a flow, a transitory movement that through its two poles produced a supplement. A supplement whose function would be none other than that of deconstructing the premises on which the translation is based culturally and which would not be intelligible until the creation of a third term distinct from the original and from the translated. The supplement is neither more nor less, neither something exterior nor the complement of the interior, it is not an accident or an essence, and every case provides a cultural model in dichotomy that points to transgression in the framework of a wide encounter between different interfaces of languages, of ways of speaking, and of understanding the world.<sup>4</sup> And it is thus that we could follow Julia Kristeva, for whom translation is a modality from which intertextuality is decentred or the formation of the subject and creative practices is transposed,<sup>5</sup> or Gayatri Spivak, for whom translation is central to discussions about race and politics.<sup>6</sup>

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and the static. In its place, he proposes a philosophy of language in which translation does not serve the original but liberates its potential, which is none other than the resistance implicit in any act of translation. Thus, followers of Benjamin's theories conceive of translation as a resistance to reading.

4 Jacques DERRIDA, “La différance” (1968), an essay included in *Marges de la philosophie*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1972. On Derrida, see Julie CANDLER HAYES, “Unconditional Translation: Derrida's Enlightenment-to-Come”, in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* (vol. 40, no. 3, 2007, pp. 443-455). See also Joseph F. GRAHAM (ed.), *Difference in Translation*, Ithaca (New York), Cornell University Press, 1985, pp. 165-207.

5 Julia KRISTEVA, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1984.

6 Gayatri Chakravorty SPIVAK, “The Politics of Translation”, in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, New York, Routledge, 1993, pp. 179-200.

Understood as a crossing point between cultural studies, diaspora studies, and anthropology, the concept of translation ceases to be purely linguistic to take on a cultural role in the context of globalisation, as had been noted by the theorists Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere in *Translation. History and Culture*.<sup>7</sup> Translation, they claim, does not exist in a purely academic world but is located within social reality; a translation is a piece of merchandise and, as such, must be authorised by people able to influence its transmission. They — with or without the collaboration of the translator — can require adaptations of the original text before disseminating the translation within the culture of its reception. The literary text, however, is not merely malleable but infinitely manipulable.

In our emerging era of cultural translation, Lefevere, for instance, rejects the nationalistic assumptions that distort literary texts to make them fit current national values. The author holds that, once nationalistic forces cease to be decisive in the development of cultures, translation will move from the periphery of cultural activity to a wider centrality. And it is thus that historians and literary critics must recognise translation not merely as a source of mediation but also as a force of innovation. Lefevere reminds the cultural historian that translation introduced the sonnet to Chinese literature, the ode to French literature, and the *Bildungsroman* to German literature. But our era requires a global canon, a process that could give more authority to translation. A step forward in considering translation as a phenomenon of cultural mediation is provided by the same authors in a later text, *Constructing Culture* (1998).

As, for their part, Mieke Bal and Joanne Morra point out,<sup>8</sup> after Bassnett and Lefevere there have been many authors who have put forward the concept of translation as a way to interrogate and understand the epistemological possibilities derived from the work of art.<sup>9</sup> And also to nurture a discursive context about questions related to globalisation and, specifically, to discussions about diaspora, exile, and the construction of the other,<sup>10</sup> to reflect on the ne-

7 Susan BASSNETT and André LEFEVERE (eds.), *Translation, History and Culture*, London and New York, Pinter, 1990.

8 Mieke BAL and Joanne MORRA, "Acts of Translation", p. 10.

9 See Joanne MORRA, "Translation into Art History", in *parallax* (vol. 6, no. 1, January-March 2000, pp. 129-138), and Mieke BAL, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2002.

10 See Homi K. BHABHA, "'Fireflies Caught in Molasses': Questions of Cultural Translation", in Rosalind KRAUSS and others (eds.), *October: The Second Decade, 1986-1996*, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, The MIT Press, 1997, p. 211-224.

cessity and at the same time the impossibility of an intercultural and international dialogue.<sup>11</sup>

In the same line, Emily Apter argues in a recent study that translation provides a discursive context around discussions about globalisation. Apter, in *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature*,<sup>12</sup> locates the concept of translation after September 11, 2001 (9/11) not as an instrument of international relations but as a question of war and peace. Through twenty theses about translation, the author puts forward the ambivalent character of translation as a process that at the same time that it provides understanding also indicates the potential of that which cannot be translated. And always suggesting that the notion of translation should be understood as an act of resistance to reading and to the materiality of language considered as a class of listening-thinking or reading-thinking.

## **Translation as an instrument to create spaces of transversal understanding**

Antoni Muntadas, Kutluğ Ataman, Rogelio López Cuenca, Jordi Colomer, and Saskia Holmkvist, among other artists, understand the task of translation as the ability to build bridges between cultures, without omitting the context of translation and considering it to be an act of communication with the framework of the dialogic turn. For them, language provides its own internal characteristics, its special ethos, although there is always something untranslatable, which is to say, a perfect transparency does not exist, which brings us to a notion of meaning that depends on what is not said and on what is not represented. Sarat Maharaj argues that when a language, an experience, or a visual regime is translated to another it has to be reformulated to be adapted to the other's mode of thinking, and that in this process something is left out. And it is thus that artists have come to say that translation requires imagining or seeing what is left out: "The remainder which cannot be put into words might be something that you can visualise or that can be suggested through

<sup>11</sup> Stuart HALL and Sarat MAHARAJ, "Modernity and Difference: A Conversation between Stuart Hall and Sarat Maharaj", in *Annotations 6: Modernity and Difference*, London, inIVA, 2001, pp. 36-56.

<sup>12</sup> Emily APTER, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature*, Princeton (New Jersey), Princeton University Press, 2011.

sonic stuff, through ‘sounding of that difference’ as a kind of turbulence, as a cloud of disturbance around clear-cut linguistic meaning”.<sup>13</sup>

Following this discursive line, an exhibition held in 2011 at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, *Found in Translation*,<sup>14</sup> presented videos and films of eleven artists — Sharon Hayes, Keren Cytter, Paul Chan, Jenny Perlin, Omer Fast, Steve McQueen, Patty Chang, Brendan Fernandes, Lisa Oppenheim, and Sharif Waked — who understood translation as being at the same time a model and a metaphor in order to comment critically on the past and generate rich possibilities for the present. The act of converting a text from one language (the verbal) to another (the visual), although it can seem to be a simple linguistic task, nonetheless becomes a microcosm for interaction between cultures that is always attentive to a double dimension: the aesthetic and the political. Language and the actions of reading and speaking in the works of Patty Chang, Keren Cytter, and Lisa Oppenheim create cinematic reinterpretations of the texts to which they refer. Paul Chan, Brendan Fernandes, Sharon Hayes, and Jenny Perlin turn their attention to political history, incorporating written material from the past to bring us to questions of identity, protest, privacy, and freedom of expression in the present. And, in general, all of them indicate different ways in which translation can cast light on the complex historical and political processes that govern life in a globalised world. In the case of Patty Chang, the video installation *Product Love (Die Ware Liebe)* (2009) starts from a text published by Walter Benjamin in 1928 in the German magazine *Die Literarische Welt*,<sup>15</sup> and in which the philosopher narrates his meeting with the American actress Anna May Wong, to provide three protagonists: two women (one of whom is Asian) and a man, with the aim of translating Benjamin’s article into English, without satisfactorily accomplishing it.<sup>16</sup>

For her part, Lisa Oppenheim, in her film installation *Cathay* (2010), pays homage with this title to the poet Ezra Pound, who in 1915 published a text under the same name, the fruit of his fascination with notions of translation and in which he developed a poetic style through which abstract concepts were expressed by means of combinations of concrete images. This pictographic trans-

13 Stuart HALL and Sarat MAHARAJ, “Modernity and Difference: A Conversation between Stuart Hall and Sarat Maharaj”, pp. 36–56. See also Sarat MAHARAJ, “Perfidious Fidelity: The Untranslatability of the Other”, in *Annotations 6: Modernity and Difference*, p. 28–35.

14 Nat TROTMAN (ed.), *Found in Translation* (exhibition catalogue), New York, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 11 February–1 May 2011, and Berlin, Deutsche Guggenheim, 2012.

15 See Walter BENJAMIN, *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 2016.

16 Patty Chang. Available at <http://www.pattychang.com/the-product-love> (Consulted 5 May 2019).

ference between image and text inspired Oppenheim's work, which designed the double projection *Cathay* as a confrontation between the translation of a poetic fragment of the eighteenth-century Chinese poet Li Bai, which Pound had adapted in his book, and a more contemporary and literal (but less warm and less spiritual) translation, of the same passage.<sup>17</sup>

**Kutluğ Ataman**, in works such as *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (2008) and *English as a Second Language* (2009) (from the series *Mesopotamian Dramaturgies*), questions modernity as a manifestation of a failed translation by converting this failure into a performative and creative act. In the first work, we see a projection of the typed transcript of all Shakespeare's plays and poems, in what Cüneyt Çakırlar<sup>18</sup> calls "extratextual translation" or, more specifically, the transfiguration of the text into the calligraphic image through different cultures. In the second work, we see a young Turk reading aloud the verses of Edward Lear in English, understood as the lingua franca of globalisation. And it is thus that these two works could be considered not only as a critical commentary on the republican vision of modernity in Turkey but also as the demonstration of the potential failure of translation itself or of what we could call Western mimicry. The appropriation of the West by non-Western geographies is the common theme of the series *Mesopotamian Dramaturgies* (2009), in which the artist addresses the region of Mesopotamia as a concept, a space of tension, and a collapse of meaning.<sup>19</sup>

Already conceived as a work in progress at the time of its creation in 1999-2000 during a stay in Tunisia, *El Paraíso es de los extraños* [Paradise is for strangers], by **Rogelio López Cuenca** (Nerja, 1959), is a project that analyses and recreates the construction of the image that we in the West have of the Islamic world, on the basis of the explosion of fundamentalist violence in Algeria and Tunisia, accompanied by the closing of European borders and the toughening of visa conditions demanded by the constitution of the Schengen zone. As the artist argues:

The ideological substratum of this gaze is none other than that which Edward W. Said has found, dissected, and displayed in *Orientalism*, that is, an intellectual practice produced around an object (the East) postulated as radical and substan-

17 Lisa Oppenheim. Available at [www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/artwork/27425](http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/artwork/27425) (consulted 20 April 2015).

18 Cüneyt ÇAKIRLAR, "Aesthetics of self-scaling: Parallaxed transregionalism and Kutluğ Ataman's art practice", in *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies* (vol. 27, no. 6, 2013, p. 703).

19 Cüneyt ÇAKIRLAR, "Aesthetics of self-scaling: Parallaxed transregionalism and Kutluğ Ataman's art practice", p. 704.

tially different from a historical subject (the West). Orientalism is based on an ontological and epistemological distinction between East and West that seems to follow in a natural way from their unequal historical situations, with the East seen as being permanently backward in relation to the advance of the West. The Orient, to our eyes, does not have history, it is something essential, immovable, redundant, strewn with anecdotes, with little variations that, rather than change it, guarantee its timelessness.<sup>20</sup>

Following in the wake of López Cuenca's earlier works in which he had tackled the subject of the journey, migrations, tourism, and exile (as in the case of *No/W/here*, 1998), *El Paraíso es de los extraños* (1999-) (fig. 20) was born as a project of cultural translation about how the Western gaze, as the quintessential historical subject, has created and mystified the image of the East — specifically in the Arab-Muslim space — converting it into a stereotype:

This conception of otherness as a mere non-participating object — when not negative — of “universal” history represents one of the core principles around which López Cuenca develops his work of critical exploration.<sup>21</sup>



**Figure 20.** Rogelio López Cuenca, *El paraíso es de los extraños* (1999-).

20 Interview with Rogelio López Cuenca. Available at [http://ayp.unia.es/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=460](http://ayp.unia.es/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=460) (consulted 21 April 2015).

21 Oriol SILVESTRE, “Rogelio López Cuenca: *El Paraíso es de los extraños*”, in Anna Maria GUASCH (ed.), *La memoria del otro*, pp. 137-139.

The title, which comes from a *hadith* (a saying traditionally ascribed to the prophet, which does not form part of the revelations included in the Koran) and is cited in Amin Maalouf's novel *Léon l'Africain* (English translation, *Leo Africanus*),<sup>22</sup> sustains an archive of images of the language of the media, of artistic iconography, of the use of collective memory, and of the industry of the spectacle that López Cuenca collects and maintains on a website that eventually develops into the elements of an exhibition.<sup>23</sup> The online archive consists of a huge collection of images of the Arab-Islamic world, some of which deal in a most direct way with the relation of Spain to Islam — Al Ándalus — and, far from forming an accumulative or descriptive container, function as part of a dialectical code of translation; ultimately, it is thereby made evident that the Western imagination, in seeking the ideal image, translates the image of the “Moor” (*moro*), of the other, into a stereotype. Thus, López Cuenca tells us, the idea of the West is inconceivable without its exclusive relationship to the East. The similarities and oppositions that are generated in the processes of definition of identity are framed in a way of understanding translation as a borrowing and exchange of concepts between disciplines. We could also speak of a kind of model between the visual arts and literature, given that many of the images of López Cuenca's archive appear accompanied by written commentaries, such as:

The journey to the East is a journey to a cultural object created by the West, it is a European invention, and it is, above all, a journey into the past, a construction made through the rationalisation and denaturalisation of a given reality.<sup>24</sup>

In this historical — and not chronological — journey through the various views that have contributed to a fixation of the image of the Moor in Western culture, López Cuenca does not hesitate to resort to parody or caricature, sarcasm, and poetry. And in all his exhibition installations, a fundamental ele-

22 This was the particular dictum that inspired Rogelio López Cuenca: “To those men who, by not having emigrated, live the cruellest of tortures, the mufti gives them the name of *Ghuraba*, Strangers, thus referring to the Word of the Messenger of God: ‘Islam has started being strange and will continue to be strange until the end. Paradise is for strangers.’” (Amin Maalouf, *Leo Africanus*, 1986). As Rogelio López Cuenca argues: “Traditionally the term *ghuraba* (stranger) has been interpreted as alluding to the Muslim as stranger, who, living among infidels, finds it impossible to fulfil the precepts of his faith; but also, other interpretations can see in the text a recognition of religious heterodoxy.” Interview with Rogelio López Cuenca. Available at [http://ayp.unia.es/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=460](http://ayp.unia.es/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=460) (consulted 21 April 2015).

23 Available at <https://lopezcuenca.com/proyectos/paraíso/paraíso.html> (consulted 21 April 2015).

24 Available at <https://lopezcuenca.com/proyectos/paraíso/paraíso.html> (consulted 21 April 2015).

ment is the participation of the viewer, who is transported via an Internet site that gives the public free access not only to the archive of the artist's images but also to an online questionnaire that poses a series of questions about his or her perception of the Arab-Muslim world. Do you know any Arab words? Do you personally know any Arab or Muslim people? Do you know any work of Arab art? And the name of any Arab artist or writer? Do you remember the name of any historical Arab person? These are among the questions that the demand a subjective response from the participating subject that will be integrated into the process of debate and reflection.

The objective is the analysis of the two poles of the translation of the artefact that appears in front of our eyes as *Arab-Islamic world*, the analysis of the meanings (some open and clear, others subtle and oblique) that serve as a vehicle in a given cultural context, from which those images and discourses are produced, and to show how the communications media and the industry of the spectacle create, maintain, and exploit these symbolic conventions that Europe holds about Orientalism and which López Cuenca seeks to deconstruct in order ultimately to reinvent and reconstruct.

**Jordi Colomer**, in the work *Arabian Stars*, made in Yemen in 2005 (fig. 21), uses icons of Western media culture in a world where this culture has no roots. And he places it in Sana'a, the capital of Yemen — in a clear allusion to Pier Paolo Pasolini's film *The Walls of Sana'a* (1971) — where a group of Yemeni citizens leave their regular occupations to join a kind of parade, procession, or improvised journey through the streets of the cities of Sana'a as well as Shibam, Aden, and the desert. And all carrying posters with the names of famous people, real and imaginary, international and local (Michael Jackson, Pikachu,



**Figure 21.** Jordi Colomer, *Arabian Stars* (2005).

James Bond, Zinedine Zidane, the singer Abo Bakr Saalem, the poets Al Zubeiri and Albaradoni, and the minister of human rights Amat al-Alim al-Susua), written in Arabic characters (the Western names transliterated phonetically to Arabic), which presents us with a paradoxical act of translation: the possibility of a linguistic translation and at the same time the impossibility of a cultural translation. And while most of the names of Western celebrities are unknown in Yemen, it is also certain that the famous poets, politicians, and singers of Yemeni culture are equally unknown in the West.<sup>25</sup>

For her part, **Saskia Holmkvist** (1971), through a conceptual approach and adopting methodological practices close to journalism, theatre, documentary film, and psychoanalysis, establishes a framework of encounter and conversation from which people of different categories and professions exchange knowledge and generate areas of conflict of interest. And this is with a single aim: an approach to language used in its verbal dimension (or in any other form) as an instrument to control a particular situation in the field of communication.

Questions such as “What influence does an interpreter have when politicians negotiate across the language barrier?” are asked in the film *In Translation* (2012), in which two interpreters are interviewed in the presence of their respective clients and which explores the different roles that are performed in the act of translation. The interviews approach different techniques of interpretation and various issues raised by the very act of interpretation.<sup>26</sup>

## The *On Translation* project: Antoni Muntadas

The question of translation as a way of capturing the traces of the other in oneself in working within the confines of the context in which these very traces occur and of doing so through the tension between difference and identity, respecting the individuality and originality of the presence of the other voice, explains in part the project *On Translation*, which **Antoni Muntadas** (Barcelona, 1942) has developed, as a work in progress, since 1995 in various contexts, in different cities and places, and on different scales, with a common denominator: to tackle the problem of communication as a way of replacing the question of language. Translation, reception, codification, encryption, and interpretation in the territory of global culture not only serve him in ana-

25 William JEFFETT, “Desert Stars”, in *Arabian Stars* (exhibition catalogue), St. Petersburg (Florida), Salvador Dalí Museum, and Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2005, p. 155.

26 Available at <http://saskiaholmkvist.com/in-translation/> (consulted 21 April 2015).

lysing the passage from one culture to another but also to question relations with institutions, power, the communications media, place, and context. And, as Emily Apter argues: “translation, in the work of Muntadas, would come to its full expression as a metaphor of metaphors (*meta-phorein*, to carry beyond), which is to say, as a term to designate processes of transmission, transport, transference, and mediation as such.”<sup>27</sup>

As the artist himself puts it:

*On Translation* is a series of works that explore questions of transcription, interpretation, and translation. From language to codes. From silence to technology. From subjectivity to objectivity. From agreement to wars. From the private to the public. From semiology to cryptography. The role of translations/translators as made visible/invisible.

Under this heading, in the first work of the work in progress, *On Translation: The Pavilion* (Helsinki, 1995), Muntadas analyses the invisible condition of the translator (displayed in cabins in a glass pavilion that had been used by simultaneous translators in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe held in Helsinki in 1975), while in a new presentation, *The Internet Project* (Documenta, Kassel, 1997), he placed the emphasis on language itself and its uses, in this case using computational linguistics. The work involved a website (<http://adaweb.walkerart.org/influx/muntadas/project.html>) which allowed the following of the process in a spiral or helix of translating the same phrase from one language to another (to a total of 23). The phrase in question was: “Communication systems offer the possibility of developing a better understanding between people.”

This work was followed by *La mesa de negociación I* [The negotiating table] (Madrid, 1998, with a second version made for the Venice Biennale of 2005) whose circular surface, divided into twelve equal parts, was covered with ten backlit maps or cartographies that referred to the production and consumption of culture, the economy, technology and communications, and — in general — to the distribution of wealth around the world; and by *The Audience* (Rotterdam, 1998-2001), a set of triptychs, with spaces and audiences related to the cultural world and placed in places of transit, in non-places, public spaces of exploration between culture and its audiences through filters (cultural institutions, the media, and architectural scenarios).

<sup>27</sup> Emily APTER, “Muntadas’ art of translation: Medium, media and politic”, in *Muntadas: Entre/Between*, p. 190.

In other cases, Muntadas not only shows an interest in language but also in the theory of communications media, which regards translation as a filter. This happens in *On Translation: Culorea* (Arad, Romania, 1998), a publication edited from the photographic recording of the use of the colour blue in telephone boxes, street furniture, and traffic signals in the Romanian city of Arad), and in *On Translation: Warning* (1999-), which repeats the phrase:

Attention: Perception requires participation in publicity hoardings, advertisements, posters and always in the public space of our global society: “Warning” can be equivalent to the colloquial expression “Listen up”, often used in the United States as a military order or a command in sports but which also evokes a more threatening form, such as the German order *Achtung!* (attention, silence), which forms part of a chain of meanings that include, “Danger, high voltage” and whose pictogram — SS — was appropriated by the Nazi security forces.<sup>28</sup>

A new nucleus of work — among which can be found *On Translation: The Edition* (2000), *On Translation: The Interview* (Birmingham, Alabama, 2002), a reflection on the role of the translator based on an interview carried out by CNN with a Russian-American translator, Pavel Palazchenko, during the end of the Cold War and perestroika, and *Protokolle* (Stuttgart, 2006), featuring interviews with various translation professionals about their own protocols — approaches the specific mechanics of translation and the various agents involved in them.

In other cases, Muntadas delves into questions referring to recent history, as in the case of *Aplauso* (Bogotá, 1999) (fig. 22), a video installation in triptych form which was projected on three contiguous screens. The central image revealed a scene of violence, in black and white and without sound. Violence as a mediatic spectacle and applause as a social convention that denotes consensus, satisfaction, and acceptance. And he can also reflect on the image of the city, as in *On Translation: Die Stadt* (1999-2004) and *On Translation: La imatge* (Barcelona, 2002), which have their particular logo in a large-format blueprint, like those of the series *Meetings*, in which Muntadas outlines on a blue background a negotiating table with semi-anonymous people, mediatic leaders directly related to the museum institution, an image that — without any written commentary and in the style of visual rumour — was repeated until February 2003 in various formats and versions, on stickers, on

28 Emily APTER, “Muntadas’ art of translation: Medium, media and politic”, pp. 193-194.

t-shirts, on plates, and on advertising hoardings in Barcelona, beyond “protected space”.



**Figure 22.** Antoni Muntadas, *El Aplauso*, 1999.

*On Translation: Die Stadt* (the city) was presented in three cities — Barcelona, Lille, and Graz — which describe a triangle in which each of them is some 1,300 kilometres from the other two and which share the fact of having led various European events or celebrations in the previous two years (Graz, European capital of culture in 2003; Lille, European capital in 2004; Barcelona, venue of the Universal Forum of Cultures in 2004). The aim? To encourage the creation of public opinion in relation to the achievements and failures, the promises and results, of the institutional political discourse and its paradoxes and contradictions. Muntadas conceived for this new project a support away from limits and the aesthetic of the museum and closer to the field of a new urban aesthetic. Hence the inclusion of a mobile and travelling element, a transformed lorry (the lorry as a metaphor of movement, of transport in the new Europe of the European Economic Community) which acts as an itinerant screen and circulates through various streets, squares, and avenues of the city of Barcelona (among others, Avinguda Diagonal, Plaça de les Glòries, Poble Espanyol, Plaça dels Àngels, and the Sagrada Família) at times that are not previously programmed.

In *On Translation: Die Stadt*, Muntadas addresses a new alliance between the disciplines of the urban and the aesthetic, between art and the social space, from a play between images of the three cities mentioned above — mostly urban and architectural images but also others linked to daily life — and voices of various speakers, such as taxi drivers, architects, town planners and people from the world of culture, anonymous people, others of great public relevance

(including Jean Nouvel, Joan Roca, Oriol Pagès, and Carme Pinós), who contribute their experiences, their adventures, and their commentaries about the city, attempting to answer some of the questions raised in advance by the artist: How can cities be transformed? How do they lose their identity? Specificity or standardisation? Cultural spectacle or high culture? Social commitment or economic profitability?

In other cases, such as *On Translation: I Giardini* (Venice, 2005), Muntadas understands translation as an open question in which the specifics of place, the people who inhabit it, individual memory, social rituals, and ultimately the question of allegory and interpretation overlap. In this case, the Pavilion, named *On Translation*, became a laboratory from which various significant mechanisms that mediated between the Pavilion itself (place-nation), the *Giardini* (physical place, landscape, and above all discursive), and the Biennale (place-territory) interacted. And an important role in this complex process was played by the *Giardini*, a metaphor of a micro-city within the macro-city of Venice (City Museum), where the processes of translation operate from the concept of space as a Napoleonic garden, as a universal exhibition, and currently as a theme park. Hence his radical intervention on the façade of the Pavilion and the inclusion of a large-format poster piece from his series *Warning (Attenzione: La percezione richiede impegno)* [Attention: Perception requires participation], whose typography, red colour, and location was somewhere between publicity, propaganda, and mediatic communication in general. The presence of this slogan (with which Muntadas has been working since 1999) emphasises the visual paradox that goes beyond the strict arena of the exhibition area and seeks a wide space beyond the idea of the nation. Inside, Muntadas converts the big central area of the Pavilion into a kind of spacious lobby of 12 × 12 metres surrounded by a sequence of spaces in which one can see a selection of various *On Translation* projects (*Stand By*, 2005; *On View*, 2004; *The Interview*, 2002, and *The Bookstore*, 2001, among others), into a transit area, into a non-place for which he designed objects, texts, images, and furniture not only to be seen by viewers but also to be used by them. Hence the presence of seats (meetings), a kiosk (information), screens (questions and rumours), and light boxes (stand-by) in an environment that recalls both the waiting area of an airport or an estate agent as well as the foyer of an informative space and which, while guaranteeing visitors a rest area, offers them a cluster of visual and aural stimuli (exterior sound) and incites them to new behaviours. And we could ask ourselves, what place does the Biennale ultimately occupy? And Muntadas is clear: the Venice Biennale, from a perspective both historical and in the present, is that which ultimately becomes the real filter of translation.

In his desire to widen the meanings and the contexts with which an image can be understood, Muntadas has gradually returned his gaze towards intercultural translation. He did so in 2010 in *On Translation: Açık Radyo Myths and Stereotypes* which took the city of Istanbul as a filter on and through which linguistic, historical, cultural, environmental, social, and anthropological questions are projected, including the clichés derived from a touristic and even voyeuristic perspective. And it is thus that Muntadas locates us in a new scenario: an independent radio station in Istanbul, Açık Radyo, that has been going for more than 15 years, with almost a thousand programmes broadcast, and more than 70,000 listeners. The radiophonic transmissions are converted into the authentic filter of translation, an interface between the artist and the city of Istanbul. It is in the framework of a comprehensive encounter between different interfaces of languages (Turkish and English) that this collage of voices and found images should be understood, a project guided by the principles of quotation and reference which seeks to blur the limits between the visible (the image) and the invisible (voice, sound), between radio and television: watch the radio and listen to the television.

With the conviction that Istanbul's crossover of cultures (the old Byzantium, meeting point between West and East) and its inherent diversity make it impossible to reduce the city to a single and holistic image, Muntadas starts from two components — myth and stereotype — to develop an iconic-textual-sonic discourse through which — and advised by people who know the city, from journalists, town planners, academics, and intellectuals to ordinary people, such as taxi drivers — he presents five case studies that are always between cliché and stereotype: Istanbul Capital of Culture 2010, the rivalry between Istanbul and Ankara, the unbridled urban growth of the city, historical references to Turkish stereotypes (the terrible Turk), and finally the privatisation of cultural institutions and museums.

And with this same idea of the impossibility of translation, in recent works Muntadas turns his attention to the East, as in *Asian Protocols*, (fig. 23) first shown at the Total Museum of Contemporary Art in Seoul (2014),<sup>29</sup> before later presentations in China and Japan. In this case, the work requires a complex process of translation which starts with the detection of the protocols inscribed in languages, images, human behaviours, and public spaces in the cities of Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo which operate as visible and invisible structures of power and control. In the cartographies created for the exhibition — which are based on

<sup>29</sup> *Muntadas: Asian Protocols* (exhibition catalogue), Seoul, Total Museum of Contemporary Art, 25 August–19 October 2014.

concepts such as bureaucracy, contract, language, border, label, censorship, architecture, public space, test, private space, liturgy, sport, ritual, etc. (with a selection of archive material that was the fruit of a lengthy process of research and collaboration) —Muntadas seeks a meeting point in which the perspectives of the Asians — who live in the region and who know at first hand their history, culture, and traditions — are intertwined with those of foreigners, such as the artist himself, who must observe the Asian reality from the outside.<sup>30</sup>



**Figure 23.** Antoni Muntadas, *Asian Protocols* (2014).

As Nathalie Boseul Shin argues:

The experience, in this case, was as important as the result: a Spanish artist coming together in the gallery with a Korean researcher, Chinese and Japanese translators, and a Korean curator to hear the artist's questions, share opinions, and exchange and record opinions on the researcher's answers. Perhaps it was because of the sympathies thus shaped, but contrary to our worries, visitors to the gallery didn't simply read through each of the 30 questions and their answers. They had discussions, raised new questions — in short, they reacted actively and assertively.<sup>31</sup>

30 Joo Yun LEE, "Process and Research", in *Muntadas: Asian Protocols*, p. 29.

31 Nathalie BOSEUL SHIN, "'Protocol' as a Lens on Korea, China, and Japan: Muntadas' Asian Protocols", in *Muntadas: Asian Protocols*, p. 18.

# 5

## THE DIALOGIC TURN

The first of these is the fact that the system is not in a steady state. The system is in a state of flux, and the variables are changing over time. This is a dynamic system, and the variables are interdependent. The second is the fact that the system is not in a steady state. The system is in a state of flux, and the variables are changing over time. This is a dynamic system, and the variables are interdependent. The third is the fact that the system is not in a steady state. The system is in a state of flux, and the variables are changing over time. This is a dynamic system, and the variables are interdependent. The fourth is the fact that the system is not in a steady state. The system is in a state of flux, and the variables are changing over time. This is a dynamic system, and the variables are interdependent. The fifth is the fact that the system is not in a steady state. The system is in a state of flux, and the variables are changing over time. This is a dynamic system, and the variables are interdependent. The sixth is the fact that the system is not in a steady state. The system is in a state of flux, and the variables are changing over time. This is a dynamic system, and the variables are interdependent. The seventh is the fact that the system is not in a steady state. The system is in a state of flux, and the variables are changing over time. This is a dynamic system, and the variables are interdependent. The eighth is the fact that the system is not in a steady state. The system is in a state of flux, and the variables are changing over time. This is a dynamic system, and the variables are interdependent. The ninth is the fact that the system is not in a steady state. The system is in a state of flux, and the variables are changing over time. This is a dynamic system, and the variables are interdependent. The tenth is the fact that the system is not in a steady state. The system is in a state of flux, and the variables are changing over time. This is a dynamic system, and the variables are interdependent.

One of the constants among contemporary creators is the need to advance zones of dialogue which, through strategies based on the functional and critical use of language and the theory of dialogic communication (conversation, relationship, spaces of collectivisation, pedagogic environments), produce and transmit knowledge in interaction with various social actors. In this context, the artist appears as an actor who generates situations, collaborates, coproduces information and knowledge through different processes of participation in which a negotiation between expert identities and forms of knowledge is established. This desire not so much to construct objects to be consumed by a society of the spectacle as to encourage an art of action, seeking connections with reality and taking measures to repair social bonds would have as its end, as Claire Bishop argues, to “rehumanise a society rendered numb and fragmented by the oppressive instrumentality of capitalist production”.<sup>1</sup>

## Collectivism and collaboration versus dialogue

With regard to the project of relational art or relational aesthetics with which Nicolas Bourriard in the 1990s took a step forward regarding the falsely aristocratic conception that understood the work of art not as a space to be covered but as a period of time to be experienced,<sup>2</sup> a sector of contemporary artists understands relation<sup>3</sup> as a collective-collaborative practice and a counter-model

1 Claire BISHOP, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, London and New York, Verso, 2012, p. 24.

2 Nicolas BOURRIARD, *Estética relacional*, Buenos Aires, Adriana Hidalgo, 2006, p. 14. See the chapter “El arte relacional y la estética de laboratorio”, in Anna Maria GUASCH, *El arte del siglo XX en sus exposiciones. 1945-2007*, Barcelona, Ediciones del Serbal, 2009, pp. 421-434.

3 Claire BISHOP, “The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents”, in *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, p. 12. By Bishop, see also the text that marks the criticism and

connected to a decentred and heterogeneous social network, close to the model of multitude and in harmony with the post-Fordist model of social co-operation, as suggested by Paolo Virno.<sup>4</sup>

Together with utopia and revolution, collectivity and collaboration have been, in effect, some of the most persistent subjects in curatorial discourses of the past decade. Even when the artistic project is not clearly participative, there are enough references to collectivity and revolution to indicate a critical distance in respect of the new neoliberal order.<sup>5</sup> In harmony with these ideas, the exhibition *Arquitecturas para el acontecimiento* [Architectures for development] (2002)<sup>6</sup> — featuring artists such as Raimond Chaves, Stalker, Rirkrit Tiravanija, and Josep-Maria Martín — presented a critical attitude towards the real through relational or low-intensity critical practices, aimed at exploring the ludic and the unproductive in the framework of fractured and heterogeneous subjectivity. Thus, *Collective Creativity* (Kassel, 2005)<sup>7</sup> showed through 40 artistic groups how collective creativity, apart from being a form of resistance to the dominant artistic system, questioned social and political institutions. With the presence of AA Bronson, Allegoric Postcard Union/Pawel Althamer, in collaboration with Artur Zmijewski and Nowolipie Group, Contra File, Freud's Dreams Museum, Guerrilla Art Action Group, IRWIN, Oda Projesi, Radek Community, Superflex, SKART, and What is to be done?, the exhibition explored notions of communal work and collective production in its political dimension in relation to contemporary discourse and production.

To take the pulse of collaborative initiatives in which non-material work exists alongside new activist and educational — although not didactic — formats, there is much of interest in the anthology of texts *Taking the Matter into Common Hands. On Contemporary Art and Collaborative Practices*.<sup>8</sup> In particu-

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improvement of Bourriaud's relational theories and the opening towards collaborative art: "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", in *October* (no. 110, 2004, pp. 51-79).

4 Paolo Virno interviewed by Alexei Penzin, "The Soviets of the Multitude: On Collectivity and Collective Work", *Manifesta Journal* (no. 8, 2009), p. 56.

5 See Claire BISHOP (ed.), *Participation*, London, Whitechapel, 2006.

6 Martí PERAN (ed.), *Arquitecturas para el acontecimiento* (exhibition catalogue), Castelló, Espai d'Art Contemporani de Castelló (EACC), 10 July–15 September 2002.

7 *Collective Creativity*, Kassel, Kunsthalle Fridericianum, 1 May–17 July 2005. Curators: What, How & For Whom/WHW, Ivet Curlin, Ana Devic, Natasa Ilic, and Angelika Nollert. This is an independent curatorial collective that organises publications, exhibitions and projects, and which runs the Gallery Nova in Zagreb.

8 Johanna BILLING, Maria LIND, and Lars NILSSON (eds.), *Taking the Matter into Common Hands: On Contemporary Art and Collaborative Practices*, London, Black Dog, 2007.

lar, Maria Lind's text "The Collaborative Turn,"<sup>9</sup> in which, starting from Jean-Luc Nancy's concept of the inoperative community and the idea of the multitude taken from Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, she traces a genealogy between artistic practices from the end of the 1990s until today. This starts with one of the most outstanding works of collaborative art carried out in the 1990s: *No Ghost Just a Shell* (1999), a project by the French artists Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno<sup>10</sup> that incorporates popular culture, commercial art, and the art market, and which generates a wide network of friends and colleagues with whom the artists share some common interests (such as those of being part of and, at the same time, frustrating the logic of the art market). Lind analyses various collaborative typologies that include co-operative works by artists and other artists, by artists and curators, and by artists and other collectives, and which point towards a growing identification between group and utopian practices, characterised by their anti-capitalist and anti-idealist determination. And this is in a direct line with the reflections formulated by Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette in the text *Collectivism after Modernism*,<sup>11</sup> in which, through the study of the works of Le Group Amos, Bureau d'études, Wochenklausur, and Temporary Services, collectivist practices are grounded in radical political thought, based on solidarity and testimony.

There are numerous collectives, associations, and individual artists who, over the last two decades, have welcomed collective practices based on networks, constellations, alliances, coalitions, and team work not only with the objective of creating an alternative to the individualism that dominates the world of art, but also as a way of questioning through self-organisation both artistic identity and the concept of authorship. **Antoni Abad** (Lleida, 1956) is an artist who used the collaborative method in his project *mefafone.net* (fig. 24-25), started in 2014 and envisaged as a work in progress to share resources, equipment, and experience. And he does so always in relation to a specific and local situation. Abad adopts new technologies and interactive media as a social activist who understands art as a public service for those who lack visibility in the contemporary public sphere. And for this he chooses the great public sphere that is the internet — a non-place, a ubiquitous and omnipresent place — as

9 Maria LIND, "The Collaborative Turn", in *Taking the Matter into Common Hands: On Contemporary Art and Collaborative Practice*, p. 21.

10 Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno acquired the copyright for a Manga figure called AnnLee from a Japanese design company, K Works, for 46,000 yen.

11 Blake STIMSON and Gregory SHOLETTE (eds.), *Collectivism after Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination after 1945*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2007.



**Figures 24-25.** Antoni Abad, *megafone.net* (2014-).

a permanent museum of his art projects, with digital communities that have in common the development of innovative communication strategies designed for various groups at risk of social exclusion.

Antoni Abad used the mobile telephone with an integrated camera (with the data-transmission networks GRPS and UMTS) as a new interface for the first time in a work carried out in the Centro Cultural de España in Mexico and entitled *México DF: sitio TAXI* (2004-2005/2014), in which 17 taxi drivers sent audio files, texts, and images related to their work conditions in the city to a website.<sup>12</sup> The second work of the series — *Lleida: canal GITANO* (Centre d'Art La Panera, 2005) — can also be considered as involving the digital public space. In this work, Abad used a new and sophisticated system sponsored by Nokia Imaging and a latest-generation mobile telephone with a built-in camera, so that twenty members of the gypsy community in Lleida could

send to the internet in real time images, texts, and sounds, as well as the telephonic conversations that resulted from their journeys across the public and private spaces of the city.

From these pioneering works, others followed in which Abad adapted — always using mobile telephones from which to send messages to the internet — to the needs of diverse groups to address specific social problems. Once again, taxi drivers, this time in Leon, in *León: canal GITANO* (2005), social workers in Madrid in *Madrid: canal INVISIBLE* (2005), the physically disabled in the city of Barcelona in *canal ACCESIBLE* (2006), Nicaraguan immigrants

<sup>12</sup> Available at <https://megafone.net/site/index> (consulted 1 May 2015).

in *canal\*CENTRAL* (2006), Brazilian motorcycle messengers in *canal\*MOTOR-BOY* (2007), groups of young Saharans from the refugee camps of Tinduf in Algeria in *canal\*SAHARAUI* (2009), a group of immigrants in the city of New York in *canal\*PLURAL* (2011), and disabled people in the city of Montreal in *MONTRÉAL\*in/accesible* (2013). All these enabled the artist to link new communications technologies to one of the global macro-concepts, that of mobility: a mobility that, as Roc Parés points out, presents a vast variety of nuances:

[...] from the mobility that crosses frontiers between zones of taxi drivers and messengers to the suspicious mobility of the gypsies' street vending; from the mobility forced on the displaced and emigrants to the promiscuous mobility of prostitutes and transsexuals; from the limited mobility of people with functional diversity to the free-thinking mobility of Abad himself in constant movement, within the intersection of art, technology, and society.<sup>13</sup>

From other types of collaboration more involved in activist issues, one would have to cite the work of a large number of artists (Marcelo Expósito, Nuria Vila, Julieta Colomer, Park Fiction, the Democracia Avelino Sala collective, Kyle Goen, Dread Scott, Stephanie Syjuco, Anna Moreno, Nicoline Van Harskamp, and Gregory Sholette, some of whom participated in the show *The Rebel City*, curated by Miguel Amado<sup>14</sup> in 2014), very active since *Reclaim the Streets* occupied the streets of London at the beginning of the 1990s. The anti-globalisation movement, also known as the movement of movement or the social justice movement, has fostered, in effect, numerous individual and collective actions in the public space that would connect with the new way of understanding the dynamics of groups by Hardt and Negri, using the concept of multitude (see Chapter 9, "Utopia and antagonism in globalisation") and its plural and multiple character.

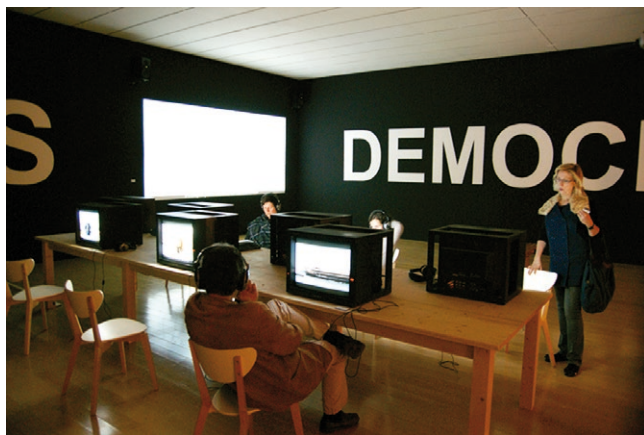
We would highlight the set of works in the public space by **Olivier Ressler** (Knittelfeld, Austria, 1970), works that are understood as forms of resistance and social alternatives to global warming, to the post-Fordist paradigm of

13 ROC PARÉS, "megafone.net/2004-2014", in *Antoni Abad: megafone.net/2004-2014* (exhibition catalogue), Barcelona, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), Turner, and AC/E, 18 February–24 June 2014, p. 21.

14 MIGUEL AMADO (ed.), *The Rebel City*, Sant Cugat (Barcelona), ADN Platform, 24 May–25 October 2014. The show examined the urban space as a place for the anti-capitalist struggle, including works ranging from those that alluded to the demonstrations against the World Trade Organization in Seattle in 1999 to works that referred to Occupy Wall Street, and others that considered the role of anarchism to be key to anti-capitalist politics.

non-material work, or linked to the question “What is democracy”? In this respect, one can highlight the video installation *What is Democracy?* (2007-2009) (fig. 26), in which the current concept of democracy is inseparable from a history of expansion and imperialism. This is a two-year work which, after posing this question to activists and political analysts in 18 cities around the world, obtained a multiplicity of perspectives and points of view from people who live in supposedly democratic states.

A large part of Ressler’s work is based on collaborations, such as the project *Boom*, with the artist David Thorne, the films *Venezuela from Below* and *5 Factories-Worker Control in Venezuela* (2006) with the political analyst Dario Azzellini, projects related to racism and migration with the artist Martin Krenn, and the film *What Would it Mean to Win* (2008) in collaboration with the artist Zanny Begg. And they present what Gregory Sholette<sup>15</sup> describes as “asymmetric networks of the art world”, some based on mutual aid and on the gift economy, and others on the market economy of institutional representation promoted by dealers and collectors. In this desire to construct spaces of dialogue where the horizontal artist and the activist networks merge, the three-channel video installation *Take the Square* (2012) stands out. This work reflects the emergence of the movements of the public squares, through discussions held with activists of the 15M in Madrid, the Syntagma Square Movement in Athens, and Occupy Wall Street in New York, and which follow the format of the working groups of these protest organisations. In front of the camera, be-



**Figure 26.** Olivier Ressler, *What is Democracy?* (2007-2009).

<sup>15</sup> Gregory SHOLETTE and Oliver RESSLER (eds.), *It's the Political Economy, Stupid: The Global Financial Crisis in Art and Theory*, London, Pluto Press, 2013.

tween four and six activists from the three cities discuss among themselves subjects related to the importance of occupying public spaces with the aim of translating the processes started in these places in transition.

As José Lebrero Stals shows in the text of the retrospective that **Pep Agut** (Terrassa, 1961) held in the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona in 2000, an important part of that which is conceived by the artist does not exist physically:

This archive of unborn creative acts is made up of annotations, descriptions of projects. Possible diagrams or alternative solutions. It is about creative material that can potentially be turned into an object that, thanks to the exhibition opportunity, is finally revealed as a unitary testimony of a discursive globality.<sup>16</sup>

It is within this “creative material that can potentially be turned into an object” that Pep Agut — who since the 1990s has focused his interest on the problem of representation, as well as the role of the artist and the place of art — developed from 2004 a multiple project that he entitled *Hércules (Autorretrato en devaluación económica y plusvalía cultural)* [Hercules (Self-portrait in economic devaluation and cultural profit)] (2004–2008), and in 2007 it reached its performative and collaborative dimension in *Hércules Público* [Public Hercules] (fig. 27). All this began with a set of works carried out in very different me-



**Figure 27.** Pep Agut, *Hércules Público* (2007.)

16 José LEBRERO STALS, “Rehabilitar el futuro (o lo que está por venir)”, in *Pep Agut: Als actors secundaris* (exhibition catalogue), Barcelona, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) and Actar, 24 March–28 May 2000, p. 7.

dia (photographs, objects in vitrines, written documents) in which the artist, in the manner of an alter ego (in the figure of Hercules) confronted from various registers the art world and its absorption by economic, legal, and historiographic systems. And if the photographic work, entitled *Hércules espectacularizándose* [Hercules making a spectacle of himself] (2006-2007) portrayed the contrived creation of the hero in our society — with multiple iconographic references to the image of the hero in modernity — in the performance in the àngels barcelona gallery, the artist remained wearing his own boots, which had previously been fixed to the floor, during the two hours of the exhibition and posing for the photographer alongside all those (in total 150 people) who approached him and to whom he gave explanations about the nature of his work.

After leaving La Fura dels Baus en 1992, **Marcel·lí Antúnez** (Mojà, Barcelona, 1959) has established himself as one of the most active artists in the use of digital technologies and “mechatronic” performance, with important works and projects such as *Epizoo* (1994), *Afasia* (1996), *Transpermia* (2003), and *Protomebrana* (2007), among other works. In the show *Sistematurgia, Acciones, dispositivos y dibujos* [Systematurgy, Actions, devices and drawings] (2014),<sup>17</sup> Antúnez uses a neologism of his own creation, “systematurgy”, to present a set of works untied by a common way of understanding the dramaturgy produced by computational systems through the combination of audiovisual elements, body interfaces, and robotic elements that are manifested in an interactive way both in the performances and in the installations. And in this respect, of the four areas into which the exhibition was divided — Processes (drawing used as an element of the creative process), Installations (games), Devices (robots and body interfaces) and Stage — it is this last of these which strengthened the collaborative character, with live performances and other interactive works. In this line, the installation ALSAXY stands out — the product of an artist’s residency in the district of HautePierre in Strasbourg (France), it involves a large screen (8 metres wide and 2.75 metres high) that allows users a varied interaction by means of different interfaces such as Boxam and Micam — as well as the project *Ultraorbism* (2015), based on *Historias Verídicas* by Luciano de Samósata.

In an earlier performance of 2012 entitled *Pseudo*, the artist used Luigi Pirandello’s posthumous work *I giganti della montagna* [The giants of the mountain] as the basis for the creation of a complex staging featuring two actors equipped

<sup>17</sup> Marcel·lí ANTÚNEZ ROCA, *Sistematurgia: Acciones, dispositivos y dibujos* (exhibition catalogue), Barcelona, Arts Santa Mònica, 4 February–7 April 2014.

with “dreskeletons”, a bodily interface of an exoskeletal nature that Marcel·lí Antúnez has used since 1998. Beyond the elements of the traditional dramatic theatrical form, we are placed in front of a new context where digital interaction, augmented reality, and various interfaces allow the actor to enhance his traditional role, seeking a total work of art that is based on the fusion of theatrical, musical and video elements, without forgetting lighting, drawing, and animation.

## Conversation and participatory instructions versus dialogue

This desire to democratise the elitist discourse of art and to insert it into a process of dialogue is also appreciated in another group of works based on an interaction between the artist and the public, which is well resolved through conversation in what the theorist Grant Kester calls dialogic art,<sup>18</sup> Suzanne Lacy terms the new genre of public art,<sup>19</sup> and Suzi Gablik dubs connective aesthetics.

According to Grant Kester, at a time during which, under the shadow of the attacks of September 11, 2001 and the tragic consequences that resulted from them, it seems that art has taken a secondary role, there is nonetheless a large number of artists and collectives whose work is inscribed in a dialogue between diverse communities, adopting a performative method that is based on meetings and collaborative conversations beyond the institutional boundaries of the gallery or the museum. Kester refers to collective or communal identities, as well as to a transcultural dialogue within which artists are defined more as agents of context than as agents of content. Kester presents the work of a series of artists who practice a collaboration that is set within cultural activism and who opt for creative dialogue and empathetic understanding of the common beyond the circuit of galleries, museums, curators, and collectors. An important example is the work of the Zurich-based collective Wockenklusur, *Intervention to Aid Drug-Addicted Women* (2004), based on a series of conversations conducted on

<sup>18</sup> Grant KESTER, “Conversation Pieces: The Role of Dialogue in Socially-Engaged Art”, in Zoya KOCUR and Simon LEUNG (eds.), *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985*, Malden, Blackwell, 2005, pp. 77-88. A first version of this text was published in *Variant* (vol. 2, no. 9, Winter 1999-2000, supplement). This article gave rise to the publication of *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*, Berkeley (Calif.), University of California Press, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> See Suzanne LACY, *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, Seattle (Wash.), Bay Press, 1995.

a boat between politicians, journalists, and activist communities about the creation of a place in which women drug addicts can find refuge. Another example of how the aesthetic experience can challenge conventional perceptions and systems of knowledge is provided by Suzanne Lacy's performative project *The Roof is on Fire* (1994), which brought together on the roof of a car park in Oakland (California) more than two hundred students, who established improvised dialogues with local residents and journalists about the problems and the stereotypes of young people of colour in California. The conversation becomes a part of the work itself. And the use of the dialogic concept emphasises more its interactive character than its dimension of socio-political activism.

The way of understanding the relationship between the work of art and the public through different forms of participation offers another example of the new genre public art with which Lacy, one of the founders of the Feminist Studio Workshop in the Woman's Building in Los Angeles,<sup>20</sup> defined in the 1990s a new type of visual art that values both traditional and non-traditional media to communicate and interact with a wide and diversified audience about issues related to their lives. In new works such as *Storying Rape* (2012), *Between the Door and the Street* (2013), *Cleaning Conditions* (2013), and in *Silver Action* (2013), or in her large-scale project *Three Weeks in January* (2012), Lacy explores contemporary subjects immersed in a political and social discourse, seeking to examine personal commitment within the political sphere through the stories of activists, of women from Britain, the United States, and different local communities, many of them trying to face the new challenges involved in ageing.

Understanding creative participation as a process, Suzy Gablik's connective aesthetics<sup>21</sup> locates creativity in a kind of dialogic structure, the result of a collaboration between a multitude of individuals. In her relational, interactive, and participative resolve, Gablik incorporates new values such as compassion and care as a response to some specific needs in which aural and oral processes take priority over visual ones. Through works such as those of Gary Glassman (the documentary video *Prisoners*, 1985-1986), Suzanne Lacy (*The Crystal Quilt*, 1987), and Mierle Laderman (*Ukeles Touch Sanitation*, 1978), con-

20 In the anthology *Mapping the Terrain* (1995), Lacy claims: "New genre public art calls for an integrative critical language through which values, ethics and social responsibility can be discussed in terms of art." She adds that it is a working model based on relations between people and on social creativity rather than on self-expression and it is characterised by co-operation based on working with marginalised groups.

21 Suzi GABLIK, "Connective Aesthetics: Art after Individualism", in Suzanne LACY (ed.), *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, p. 80.

nective aesthetics makes art a model of contact and healing through the recognition of the self in its fullest extent.

Recently, new models of collaboration within what Maria Lind calls the collaborative turn<sup>22</sup> can be traced in a good number of groups. Among these, we would highlight the works of Marysia Lewandowska and Neil Cummings, and those of the groups Raqs Media Collective (India), Chto Delat? (St Petersburg and Moscow), Irwin (Liubliana), Group Material and Critical Art Ensemble (New York), Women Down the Pub (Copenhagen), Oda Projesi (Istanbul), and Temporary Services (Chicago) which share, within their specificity, the act of understanding collaboration as contact, confrontation, deliberation, and negotiation, without at the same time renouncing a certain production of subjectivity.

From another point of view and concerning artistic practices based on participative tasks, we could speak of artists such as Santiago Sierra, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Jennifer Allora, Guillermo Calzadilla, Tania Bruguera, Tino Seghal, Phil Collins, Pawel Althamer, Artur Zmijewski, Dora García, Miquel García, and Núria Güell, who act as specialised professionals whose skills are incorporated into performance in the mode of a ready-made to create situations in which what matters is not so much privileging experiences with the body but rather the processes of mediation and delegation, strategies that can create unpredictability and risk, to the extent that the recourse to third parties can provoke ethical problems related to questions of exploitation.

In this type of collaborative practices, a special place is occupied by **Santiago Sierra** (Madrid, 1966) and, in particular, his project of remunerated aesthetics on which he has been working since 1998 and which consists of stripping the work of any of its ideological connotations to locate it in the minimal act of selling time in exchange for a determined monetary remuneration. And always in relation to the geographic places in which the work is created. When Sierra tackles the question of wages, the labour exploitation of the proletariat, the purchase of time, or the hierarchical system of class and race what is significant is not the people who are paid but the confrontations that are presented in relation to the geopolitical area that determines the real wages and to questions of cultural alterity that this area involves.

Sierra uses anonymous actors as cheap labour, as in *Línea de 250 cm tatuada sobre 6 personas remuneradas* [250 cm line tattooed on six paid people] (La Habana, 1999), in which a horizontal tattooed line links the bodies of six

22 Maria LIND, "The Collaborative Turn", pp. 15-32.

Cuban men (in exchange for an economic remuneration of 20 dollars, very high by the wage standards of the island) united by the same circumstances, that of the contradiction between socialist collectivisation and capitalist alternatives, or in *Tarea inocua* [Innocuous task] (Mexico, 2000), in which Sierra offered economic remuneration (700 pesos; 65 US dollars) to five people who had to hold a wall of the gallery, that had previously been torn away) at an angle of 60 degrees to the floor. What was Sierra's message? To pervert, corrupt a stable form (a wall associated with minimalism) with economic gains associated with the absence of productivity that referred to a useless or nihilistic conception of work. We could cite another action with tattoos involving four heroin-addicted prostitutes in Salamanca (*Línea de 160 cm tatuada sobre 4 personas* [160 cm line tattooed on 4 people], 2000) who were contracted for the price they had to pay for a fix of heroin, 12,000 pesetas, a value four times what they received for their work, or masturbatory actions, performed in Havana in 2000, specifically by ten men contracted for 20 dollars to practice onanism one by one in front of a camera. In these and other cases, such as that of the video which shows two junkies who received a quantity of heroin as payment for allowing part of their heads to be shaved (*10 Inch Line Shaved on the Heads of Two Junkies Who Received a Shot of Heroin As Payment*, 2000), we would be talking about artists who closely research the geopolitical zone in which they will carry out each action, the real wages, the social hierarchies of its inhabitants, as well as the racial characteristics.<sup>23</sup>

Born in Argentina, trained in Thailand, with studies in Canada and the United States, Rirkrit Tiravanija (Buenos Aires, 1961) used these experiences to design his projects as encounters with people from different backgrounds to generate social events in the exhibition space of museums and galleries. And it is thus how the artist, in his installations from the start of the 1990s, invites the public to share the food, drink, and even games that he prepares and serves. In 2007, he created in New York's Paula Allen Gallery what was his first work on the subject, *pad thai* (1990), which was renamed *Untitled (Free/Still)*. In 2005, for his exhibition at London's Serpentine Gallery, the artist created two replicas of his apartment with its kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom and invited each individual to discover his or her social potential on the assumption that these encounters could result in social actions. In a new installation of 2005, *untitled 2006 (pavilion, table and puzzle)*, visitors were invited to put together

23 Available at [www.santiago-sierra.com/2000\\_1024.php](http://www.santiago-sierra.com/2000_1024.php) (consulted 2 May 2015).

a giant puzzle representing the work of Eugène Delacroix *Liberty Leading the People* (1830) inside a kind of pavilion, a replica of that designed by Jan Prouvé in various episodes of France's colonial history. The communicative and political aspect of his work was consolidated in events-installations generically entitled *Untitled*. For instance, in *Untitled (The Air Between the Chain-Link Fence and the Broken Bicycle Wheel)* (2005), presented at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, the artist addressed state control of popular communications media through the installation of a pirate television station within the museum: and this accompanied by an ephemeral structure of a house with chairs and a television set. In *Untitled 2010 (14,086)*, the artist installed inside a Beijing gallery a machine to produce bricks on which, before the drying process, he printed in Chinese characters numbers from 1 to 14,068 (the number of bricks needed to construct a modest house for a small family in China), along with the phrase, also in Chinese, "Never work", a situationist slogan that sought the transformation of the alienation of the worker through the act of making work and non-work indistinguishable.<sup>24</sup>

At the beginning of the decade of the 1990s, Pawel Althamer (Warsaw, 1967) was one of the first artists who produced events with non-professional actors: collaborations with people who had been evicted, homeless people, security guards, and children. In general, marginal subjects who were orientated towards educative contexts, as with his project of a ceramics class for the Nowolipie Group, an organisation in Warsaw for adults with multiple sclerosis and other disabilities. The result of this experience could be seen in the show *Double Agent* (London, 2008), with collaborative projects in which the artists used people as a medium.<sup>25</sup> The complicity that the artist **Phil Collins** (Runcorn, United Kingdom, 1970) seeks to create with his actors in front of a camera (in a hotel room, a disco marathon, a television reality show) — actors who never receive any payment — is captured in his photographic series in progress *you'll never work in the town again* (2004-), a set of portraits of curators, collectors, dealers, and other figures from the art world, which can be seen at the same time as a preventive attack on all those who have wanted to ruin his career and also as a shared moment of intimacy, or in his video installation *the return of the real* (2002), which includes interviews with people whose lives have been seriously harmed by television reality shows. For his part, **Artur Zmijewski** (Warsaw, 1966) addresses ethical questions about representation, in particular

<sup>24</sup> See *Rirkrit Tiravanija: A Retrospective*, Zurich, JRP Ringier, 2007.

<sup>25</sup> *Double Agent*, exhibition curated by Claire Bishop and Mark Sladen, London, Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), 14 February-6 April 2008.

in relation to activities in which various groups of citizens are invited to participate in the framework of a workshop. In the case of the video *Odi/Them* (2007) he brought together groups of Christians, Jews, young socialists, and Polish nationalists and he encouraged them to design a symbolic representation of their own values. As occurs in most of his videos, it is not clear to what extent the participants act according to their own criteria or are manipulated to meet the requirements of a previously prepared narrative.

**Tino Sehgal** (London, 1976) works in what he terms constructed situations in which interpreters (he rejects the term performers) are linked to a series of actions that are established in advance. For instance, in *This Objective of that Object* (2004) each visitor who enters the exhibition space was rapidly surrounded by five interpreters who, after repeating in unison the phrase “The objective of this work is to become the object of a discussion,” waited for the response of the spectator. If this did not happen, the interpreters allowed themselves to fall slowly to the floor, but if the spectator spoke or moved, they started an improvised action, a mixture of conversation, song, and choreography. This desire to create experiences (through the interaction between voice, physical movement, and social exchange) with more value than the material objects themselves can be seen in Sehgal’s participation in the German Pavilion of the Venice Biennale of 2005, as well as in the 2012 edition of *Documenta* in Kassel.<sup>26</sup>

**Dora García** (Valladolid, 1965) started her career around 2000 by making performative works that used contracted actors as a way to replace her own presence, understanding each work as a fragile balance between set behaviour and the actor’s interpretation of instructions. In the performance *Proxy/Coma* (2001), performed inside an exhibition space, a woman walks around the enclosure of a gallery while being captured by security cameras. In *Messenger* (2002) an actor (a messenger) must deliver a message in a foreign language. The video *The Joycean Society* (2013) is part of the series of workshops in which the artist explores the relationship of the public to the work and the author. The artist portrays and films a group of readers of the James Joyce Foundation in Zurich (the biggest library on Joyce in Europe) reading aloud and commenting on *Finnegans Wake*, a work without beginning or end that Joyce wrote over eighteen years in Paris and which was published in 1939, two years before his death. A magical and cosmic work for some and a chaotic one for others, written mixing lexical units of standard English with multilingual puns and littered with

<sup>26</sup> See *Tino Sehgal* (exhibition catalogue), Berlin, Martin-Gropius-Bau, 28 June–8 August 2015.

neologisms that Dora García uses, as in *The Deviant Majority* (2010) and *The Inadequate* (2011), so that — through the wordplay — she can examine the resources of a polyphonic subjectivity that starts with the two central characters of the novel and expands in a return journey between reality and fantasy (or the trilogy of imaginary-symbolic-real) to a generic individual.

**Miquel García**, in the 2012 video *La Asamblea* (fig. 28), brought together twelve people (six men, six women) who had some shared affinities but who did not know each other directly, with the aim of carrying out an assembly in which the forms and methodologies of assemblies which the participants consider to be most practical are debated. *La Asamblea* is presented as a small pedagogic and critical essay on the politics of change that can be generated by self-management and grassroots groups. Taking this work as a starting point, in a new video work, *Prácticas de empoderamiento cultural 1* [Practices of cultural empowerment 1] (2013) and *Prácticas de empoderamiento 2* [Practices of cultural empowerment 2] (2014), he proposes the creation of a series of actions that overhaul the infrastructures and urban space, reclaiming the public domain and reflecting the privatisation and institutional abuse of the public space.<sup>27</sup>



**Figure 28.** Miquel García, *La Asamblea* (2012).

The participative practices proposed to us by **Núria Güell** (Vidreres, Girona, 1981), in which she invites convicts, immigrants, people without documents, *indignados*, and members of the police service among other groups, seek to reformulate the limits of justice in detecting the abuses of power that are committed in fulfilling established law and hegemonic morality. One of

<sup>27</sup> Available at [www.miquelgarcia.net/P-E-P-Public-Empowerment-Practices-n-1](http://www.miquelgarcia.net/P-E-P-Public-Empowerment-Practices-n-1) (consulted 1 May 2015).

the works that is located at the border between art and collaborative social projects is the installation *Ayuda Humanitaria* [Humanitarian Aid] (2008-2013) (fig. 29), in which a marriage of convenience with humanitarian objectives is conducted between the artist and a Cuban citizen, selected through a competition for “the most beautiful love letter” (chosen by three local prostitutes) and who was offered as compensation the possibility of travelling legally to Spain. Photographs of the couple and their fictitious romance through the streets of Havana, photocopies of the received love letters, and legal documents of the marriage process present us with questions of recognition, of justice, and of law as residues of a degraded humanism. And if in this work Núria Güell probes — following the ideas of Suely Rolnik in her *The Geopolitics of Pimping* (2006)<sup>28</sup> — the political and socio-economic use of emotion in the global context, in new works of the exhibition such as *Aportación moral desplazada#1: crecimiento exponencial* [Displaced moral contribution#1: exponential growth] (2010-2012), and in other proposals entitled generically *Aplicación legal desplazada* [Displaced legal application] (2011-2012) and carried out in recent years, the artist, in pursuit of participative aesthetics, allows the other individuals — such as thieves in the case of “El Solitario” (Jaime Giménez Arbe) and his plans to rob a bank, and *indignados* [the “indignant ones” whose protests included the 15M movement and the occupation of Madrid’s Puerta del Sol in 2011] who ask “is it possible to expropriate banks?” — to question the legality of the current financial system. In these and other works, such as *Intervención #1* [Intervention #1] (2012), *Oficina de rescate invertido* [Office of in-



**Figure 29.** Núria Güell, *Ayuda Humanitaria* (2008-2013).

<sup>28</sup> Available at <http://eipcp.net/transversal/1106/rolnik/es> (consulted 6 April 2015).

verted rescue] (2014), and *Sweet Europe#1 (Support Swedish Culture)* (2014), the use of social anthropology and the participation of the other convert her proposals into an example of biopolitical resistance, bombarding common realities of our lives and everyday relations with a methodology that consists of short-circuiting a law and applying it in an inverted way, revealing at the same time unethical legalised politics and the dominations by hegemonic power.

## Pedagogy versus dialogue

Within this dialogic turn, one can highlight the aspect that tackles the relationship between cultural pedagogies and notions of the production of knowledge, research, education, and contemporary visual practices. As Claire Bishop indicates, the attempts by many artists to make the relationship between art and life closer would be consolidated in educational experiments, which implies thinking in a different way about the role of the spectator and even suggesting a new understanding of art without audiences, in which nonetheless everyone is a potential producer.<sup>29</sup>

In this context, one can highlight the reflections of Irit Rogoff, who defends the need for notions of the production of knowledge, research, education, open production, and self-organised pedagogies to enter into artistic discourses seeking a greater involvement between the institution of the museum and the academic institution — that is to say, between art and academia. On this subject, Irit Rogoff, in the article “Turning”,<sup>30</sup> asks: To what do we refer when we speak of the educative turn? Are we talking about a system of reading — the pedagogic — through another system, that of exhibition, which pushes one against the other in a manner that they can open themselves to new ways of being? Or do we refer to an active movement in which a new horizon emerges in the process that leaves behind the practice from which it originated? Irit Rogoff provides various case studies to illustrate this interweaving of museum and university: one of them is the project *A.C.A.D.E.M.Y* (2005–2006), carried out at the Hamburger Kunstsverein in Hamburg, at the MUKHA in Antwerp, and at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, with the aim of generating a zone of uncertainty for the autonomy of the university and the mu-

29 Claire BISHOP, “Pedagogic Projects: ‘How do you bring a classroom to life as if it were a work of art?’”, in *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, p. 241.

30 IRIT ROGOFF, “Turning”.

seum, the two institutions that in principle offer the greatest potential for overhauling the generation of knowledge.

What can we learn from museums? What is it that museums can learn from academia? To which Rogoff replies:

Our initial question concerned whether an idea of an academy (as a moment of learning within the safe space of an academic institution) was a metaphor for a moment of speculation, expansion, and reflexivity without the constant demand for proven results. If this was a space of experimentation and exploration, then how might we extract these vital principles and apply them to the rest of our lives? How might we also perhaps apply them to our institutions? Born of a belief that the institutions we inhabit can potentially be so much more than they are, these questions ask how the museum, the university, the art school, can surpass their current functions. Of course, we touched on this problematic at the very moment a heated debate regarding the Bologna Accord—the European so-called reform of education—was erupting all around us. Instead of hanging our heads and lamenting the awfulness of these reforms, with their emphasis on quantifiable and comparable outcomes, we thought it might be productive to see if this unexpected politicisation of the discussion around education might be an opportunity to see how the principles we cherish in the education process might be applied across a broader range of institutional activities.<sup>31</sup>

Hence the two basic principles that Rogoff formulates: one in relation to the institution, that of potentiality, and the other aimed at academia, that of actualisation. Potentiality in the sense of conceiving of the possibility that the museum opens a place where people can receive ideas in a different way — the museum as a place of the possible, as a space of potentiality. Potentiality, following Aristotelian principles, would be the opposite of actualisation, which is located in the realm of the possible. And, also following Aristotle, would be two classes of potentiality: one generic (a child has the possibility of knowing) and the other based on previous learning (an architect has the potential to build). Regarding the concept of actualisation, Rogoff proposes considering academia as a space that generates principles and vital activities that must emerge from behind their walls and become a form of learning for life. And this, starting from the fact that social processes, bodies of learning, and individual subjectivities cannot be separated and distinguished from each other.

31 Irit ROGOFF, “Turning”.

These questions are raised, apart from in a publication with a significant number of scientific-artistic contributions that show the topic in all its complexity, in the previously mentioned exhibition *A.C.A.D.E.M.Y* (2005-2006), made up of visual essays (with teams of various cultural professionals, artists, theorists, students, activists), and in seminars which posed questions linked to the institution-academia union in relation to various aspects of the museum: the collection, the personnel, and activities that involve workers, visitors, and works. And starting from a central question: What can we learn from the museum beyond its artistic objects and its educational rhetoric?

Among these visual essays of what is called practice-driven theory (a space called academic that is part university, part museum, half based on theory and half on practice, one part based on doing, the other on being) what stands out are those featuring Liam Gillick and Edgar Schmitz in the project *Inverted Research Tools* (2006),<sup>32</sup> in which the question is raised of which modes of attention were beneficial in a context such as a museum or a library. In another project, *The Ambulator; or, what happens when we take questions for a walk?* (2006), Janna Graham, Valeria Graziano, and Susan Kelly, together with the public of Eindhoven, asked what occurs while we formulate questions to people during their walks, questions very different from those displayed on the didactic panels of museums, which often imply predetermined responses — with all that this implies in terms of hierarchies of knowledge and structures of power that determine the nature of such questions and that of those who ask them.

After the A.C.A.D.E.M.Y project, a new curatorial team made up of an artist, Anton Vidokle,<sup>33</sup> and the curators Mai Abu ElDahab and Florian Waldvogel designed the Manifesta 6 of 2006 (which never came to open its doors) in Nicosia as a contemporary art school of twelve weeks' duration. The biennial, understood as an independent educational para-institution (taking as its model Copenhagen Free University, the Free University of Los Angeles, and the Invisible Academy of Bangkok), no longer depended on the presentation of works and objects and what it sought was to become a discursive genre. There was nothing real to see: only activities that defied the models of consumption, creation, and production of art and which sought a place among a politically committed community of cultural producers:

32 *Academy: Learning from the Museum*, Eindhoven, Van Abbemuseum, 16 September–26 November 2006. Curators: Charles Esche, Kerstin Niemann, and Irit Rogoff.

33 For a later evaluation of Manifesta 6 (2006), see Anton VIDOKLE, "Exhibition as School of Art", in Johanna BILLING, Maria LIND, and Lars NILSSON (eds.), *Taking the Matter into Common Hands: On Contemporary Art and Collaborative Practices*, pp. 87-97.

This project must be a call for the politicisation of art production, not for political art. It can make us dust off our Noam Chomsky, Arundhati Roy, Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Antonio Negri, Jacques Derrida, Slavoj Žižek and listen, or even act [...] The actual activity that can take place in a school — experimentation, scholarship, research, discussion, criticism, collaboration, friendship — is a continuous process of redefining and seeking out the potential in practice and theory at a given point in time. An art school is not concerned solely with the process of learning, but can be and often is a highly active site of cultural production: books and magazines, exhibitions, new commissioned works, seminars and symposia, film screenings, concerts, performances, theatre productions, new fashion and product designs, architectural projects, public resources such as libraries and archives of all kinds, outreach, organisation — these and many other activities and projects can all be triggered in a school [...] The activities of the Manifesta 6 School are an attempt to infiltrate the space of the city, to transform it and be transformed by it.<sup>34</sup>

In this new role, the curators were made directors of the school, the invited artists became teachers, and young artists, critics and curators were the students. And the main objective was the need to create situations, to seek frameworks of contact. But everything remained in theory and it was not possible to evaluate either the type of artistic project, or the possible flexibility of the institution, or the students' actual capacity for action.

From another direction, the exhibition *Un saber realmente útil* [Really useful knowledge]<sup>35</sup> (2014) points towards the need for self-education, such as shown by the notion of useful knowledge, coined at the beginning of the nineteenth century in the context of working-class consciousness in the United Kingdom to describe a set of non-practical disciplines — such as politics, economics, and philosophy — as opposed to the useful knowledges of engineering, physics, chemistry, and mathematics. The show reflects on the notion of critical pedagogy as a crucial element in collective struggles and investigates how education can channel the tension between individual emancipation and social emancipation with examples that were both historical and current.<sup>36</sup>

34 Mai ABU ELDAHAB, "On How to Fall With Grace—or Fall Flat on Your Face", in *Notes for an Art School*. Available at <https://manifesta.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/NotesForAnArtSchool.pdf> (consulted 25 March 2019).

35 *Un saber realmente útil* (exhibition catalogue), curatorial project of the collective WHW (What, How and for Whom), Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 29 October 2014–9 February 2015.

36 Among the artists involved in the show were: Chto Delat?, Phil Collins, Emory Douglas, Núria Güell and Levi Orta, Adelita Husni-Bey, Abbas Kiarostami, Darcy Lange, Victoria Lomasko,

Taking the museum as a pedagogic place dedicated to the analysis of artistic forms interconnected with real or imagined social relations, *Un saber realmente útil* brought together works in multiple formats of more than thirty artists, such as the collective Subtramas, Núria Güell, Mladen Stilinovic, Cecilia Vicuña and Brook Andrew, Catarina Simao, also including artists and groups close to activism, such as Victoria Lomasko and Mujeres Públicas.

In the framework of the show, there was a conversation between the American conceptual artist and experimental geographer Trevor Paglen and his compatriot Jacob Appelbaum, an information-security researcher, hacker, and defender of internet privacy, on the interferences between technology, power, and the public sphere, using the specific spaces of art. Within the exhibition project *Un saber realmente útil*, Paglen invited Jacob Appelbaum into a conversation about the increase in governmental surveillance and the way in which this affects individuals' freedoms and capacity for action.

Founded in 2013 by Jonas Staal in collaboration with BAK (*basis voor actuele kunst*), a new project, *New World Academy*, received representatives of stateless political organisations with the aim of exploring, in conjunction with artists and students, the role of art at the centre of the political struggle. In April 2015, the Centraal Museum of Utrecht housed an exhibition entitled *New World Academy* which, in the hands of artists including Moussa Ag Assarid, Constant, Dilar Dirik, Marlene Dumas, Michail Grobman, Hans Haacke, Lisa Ito, Crisanto de Leon, Alexander Nieuwenhuis, Yoonis Osman Nuur, Dirk Poot, Mazou Ibrahim Touré, Jan Toorop, Charley Toorop, UgatLahi Artist Collective, the refugee collective We Are Here, and Erich Wichmann, presented a discussion about the meaning of statelessness and the role that art could play in the representation of repressed histories of languages and symbols in a search for possible alternatives to the state.

Performance, installation, and video make up what **Tania Bruguera** (Havana, 1968) calls *Cátedra Arte de Conducta* [Behaviour Art Department], which initially arose as a need to renew obsolete pedagogic methods in Havana's Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA), where the artist had been a student, but then took on a new momentum as a response to the reception of her work *Untitled* at Documenta 11 in Kassel (2002), a work about the "political imaginary of place" which made clear references to the Nazi past.

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Mujeres Públicas, Daniela Ortiz, Trevor Paglen, Straub-Huillet, Traficantes de Sueños, Lidwien van de Ven, Cecilia Vicuña, and Carla Zaccagnini.

Although Bruguera's work was very well received by critics, the artist returned to Havana frustrated, and came to the conclusion that she needed to change the use of the time required to experience her projects in greater depth.

I wanted to situate the process of thinking within the work and not outside of it. I started thinking about appropriating the structure and the resources of power as my medium, as my material. Instead of representing them, I wanted to put them in action; that would be my work.<sup>37</sup>

Out of this emerged the *Cátedra Arte de Conducta*, which opened in January 2003 and closed in 2010.<sup>38</sup> This was a multifaceted school — interactive, participative, an experiment in pedagogy — which had the aim of stimulating in Cuba a new generation of artists less commercialised and more politicised. In its sphere of action and its critical self-awareness as an institution, Bruguera's school proposed working with behaviour as an art material. And to this end, it based itself on Joseph Beuys and his educational project at the Academy of Düsseldorf and also on the theories of Paulo Freire and John Dewey, which see education as a place not only to acquire information but also to collectively create and develop human social potential. Bruguera emphasised identifying subjects of a social and political character with performative practices, and she created a programme of two exhibitions a year with an invited curator for each semester. These exhibitions — most of them of an ephemeral character — did not so much have a relation with the works as with the creativity generated in the various processes of collaboration between the curator and the students-artists. Over its seven years, the artists and

37 Tania Bruguera interviewed by Tom Finkelpearl (2009). Available at <http://www.taniabruquera.com/cms/528-0-Introduction+on+Useful+Art.htm> (consulted 5 May 2019). An edited version of the interview was published as Tom FINKELPEARL, "Cátedra Arte de Conducta", in *What We Made*, Durham (N. C.), Duke University Press, 2013, pp. 179-203.

38 In an interview with Tom Finkelpearl, Bruguera said that the project was at the point of becoming an institution: it had a format that was too fixed, it was too clear for people, and too comfortable. The aim of the project — which at first no one believed was possible — was to fill a space by creating a utopian dream that had been broken. She added that the best thing that could be done was to create a space, create a desire in way that the participants felt the need to create their own utopias, their own projects to fill this space. For the artists who work with creating institutional forms, the most challenging aspect was knowing when and how to stop. With these projects, the ending is as important as the beginning. At times doing what people do not like is what needs to be done, Bruguera continued, adding that the need for a good educational system was not solved by her project. Rather it is something that has to be part of a collective effort, of a common desire for change, and now is the time for new generations to do their work, to take on this task. See Tom FINKELPEARL, "Cátedra Arte de Conducta", pp. 179-203.

curators who passed through the workshops included Dan Perjovschi, Dora García (with a workshop called “*Rumor, Rumor*” [Rumour, Rumour]), Christoph Buchel, Stan Douglas, Artur Zmijewski, and Núria Güell, who worked with the idea of useful art and put this into practice with a work that consisted of selling internet services in exchange for knowledge about the means of everyday survival.



6

**THE TURN OF MEMORY  
AND HISTORY**

The first of these is the fact that the system is not in a steady state. The system is in a steady state only if the rate of change of the system is zero. In this case, the rate of change of the system is not zero, and the system is not in a steady state. The second of these is the fact that the system is not in a steady state. The system is in a steady state only if the rate of change of the system is zero. In this case, the rate of change of the system is not zero, and the system is not in a steady state. The third of these is the fact that the system is not in a steady state. The system is in a steady state only if the rate of change of the system is zero. In this case, the rate of change of the system is not zero, and the system is not in a steady state.

To approach the turn of memory or the “memory effect”,<sup>1</sup> it is necessary to consider that in art today memory has become both a historical concern and an artistic and theoretical problem, and that this has encouraged what we could call the memorialist turn, which is translated into a renewed interest in memory and instinctive memory (*mnemé* or *anamnesis*), but also in memory as deposit or storage (*hypómnema*), individual memory, and collective or cultural memory. As Pierre Nora and Andreas Huyssen have indicated, works of art can be considered repositories of memory or places of memory, assuming that the memories and histories that appear in them — represented or suggested — belong to different contexts and latitudes, to a specific time and a particular place.

And all these typologies of memory are dominated by a certain obsession with the past through excavation, nostalgia, and — in most cases — the reactivation of earlier works. Hence the fact that many current artists resort to collecting, recollecting, and presenting — through fractured narrations — images and information of a world perceived as a transdisciplinary database. Artists who in some way follow the methodological legacy of Aby Warburg, whose project *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1927-1929) showed the memory effect underlying the temporal and spatial current of the history of Western and non-Western art through an eclectic, diverse, and unequal collection of visual fragments in which each image is a fixed interval but whose final reading is understood only by assembling these intervals.

This transdisciplinary perspective of memory has meant that ethnography, the cult of the present, and interest in the spatial do not end up far away from the question of time and memory. In other words, that which was exclusive to anthropology — that is, the study of inhabited spaces through categories referring to geography, borders, trading routes, migration, displacements,

1 Charles GREEN, “The Memory Effect: Anachronism, Time and Motion”, in *Third Text* (vol. 22, no. 6, November 2008, pp. 681-697).

and diasporas — becomes involved in historical analysis with a universalist vocation, linked to temporal continuities and attentive to the reconstruction of the past/present.

The synchronic (horizontal mode of working) and the diachronic (vertical mode) are no longer seen as separate and even antagonistic categories but, through the interstitial zone that is memory and through intervening both in history and in the present, as being produced in parallax. In *Tristes tropiques* (1955), Claude Lévi-Strauss<sup>2</sup> had already proposed a close relationship between ethnography — the product of mapping the territory of fieldwork, participant observation, journalistic inventory-chronicle, and the book of confessions — and memory and forgetting. Or, in other words, between the print or the ruin and the memory, questions that years later were endorsed by David Harvey<sup>3</sup> and Andreas Huyssen, who in *Present Pasts. Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (2003)<sup>4</sup> highlighted that the growth of discourses about memory was connected not only to the debate started in the 1980s about the Holocaust and its concept of territorialised memory but also to the displacement towards the memory of the other, in which the cartographic (belonging to synchronic thinking) and the memorialist (belonging to diachronic thinking) flow together.

Marc Augé goes a step further in this direction and draws an ethnological-social situation in relation to what he calls pure time, a time without date that is not present in our world of images, simulacra, reconstructions, and history. With the non-places of over-modernity already defined — the non-anthropological places that accelerate history, portray space, and individualise destinies (which is to say, the non-anthropological spaces that can be understood neither as spaces of identity nor as relational or historical spaces) — it is time to specify the places of memory, populated by ruins, by disorganised layers of rubble and monuments of the past, the places of a pure and lost time, the places uncorrupted by the falsification of reality which tries to convert them into consumer goods, always places of truth and of life whose jurisdiction, Augé argues, is always tied to art.

Compared with traditional anthropology — which, facing the source of the reality, tried to construct an inventory of lost objects through which it

2 Claude LÉVI-STRAUSS, *Tristes Tropiques*, New York, Penguin Books, 1992 (1955).

3 David HARVEY, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1990.

4 Andreas HUYSEN, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2003.

could develop interpretive theories, historical sequences, and mythical episodes — the new anthropologist did not work with ruins as inanimate objects or as skeletons of the past. For this new anthropologist and for artist that developed this problematic, to contemplate the ruins of reality and to work with them does not imply undertaking a journey through history but rather living the experience of pure time which, ultimately, is the time of the present, as it is not the time of the past:

In its past dimension, history is too rich, multiple, and profound to be reduced to the sign of a stone that has escaped from it, a lost object like those that archaeologists recover which they rummage for in their spatiotemporal cutting. In the dimension of the present, the emotion is of aesthetic order, but the spectacle of nature is combined in this dimension with that of the relics.<sup>5</sup>

The artist does not work alone, but analyses and communicates what is in front of his or her eyes: cities, subjugated fields, colonisers, colonised, potentates, the starving, the indigenous, immigrants, men, women ... given that for them to make an inventory of the dilapidated fragments of reality is not an end in itself, and nor is it even an end; what is important is the reinvention, the reconstruction of reality. “Humanity is not in ruins,” Augé claims. “It is under construction. It still belongs to a history, a history that is often tragic, always unequal, but irremediably common.”<sup>6</sup> It is necessary to return to feeling time in order to be aware of history:

At a time in which everything conspires to make us believe that history has ended and that the world is a spectacle in which this end is staged, we must return to having time to believe in history. This would be the pedagogic vocation of the ruins.<sup>7</sup>

In the contemporary global context, there is a good number of artists who act as historical agents of memory — in clear opposition to the contemporary forms of amnesia, destruction, and degeneration — seeking the production of acts of remembrance. Artists for whom a renewed humanist concern drives the way of telling history, in general using a discontinuous form focused on the simultaneity of separate but at the same time contingent social frameworks, and

5 Marc AUGÉ, *El tiempo en ruinas*, Barcelona, Gedisa, 2003, pp. 18 and 45-46.

6 Marc AUGÉ, *El tiempo en ruinas*, p. 19.

7 Marc AUGÉ, *El tiempo en ruinas*, p. 53.

an infinity of agents that turn the historical process into a structural system of changing interactions between the social, the economic, the cultural, and finally the ecological. We would speak, as Andreas Huyssen<sup>8</sup> argues, of a hypertrophying of memory during times marked by the present perfect (at the opposite extreme of the present futures of high modernity), a hypertrophying that began in the 1970s with the postcolonial and decolonisation movements and which strengthened during the 1980s in Europe and the USA thanks to the ever-wider debate around the Holocaust or the Shoah.

A debate that did not end in the 1990s, in part because of a certain contamination and displacement of the discourses of the Holocaust revived by the traumatic experiences of the genocide in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Kosovo, by the new political situations of the countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and by the post-dictatorial regimes of Latin America. Experiences that have shaped a new prototype of the political artist who relates to power through history — and memory in particular — understanding this as something alive, as an emotive and magical phenomenon, as something directed towards the specific (in space, gesture, image, and object), almost the opposite of the concept of history understood as a phenomenon of the past, more intellectual, with a universalist vocation and linked to temporal continuities.

In relation to this, we would highlight the show *Lugares de la memoria* [Places of Memory] (2001), a project of José Miguel G. Cortés which, in the face of a society mediated by the spectacle, proclaimed in artists such as Mirosław Balka, Eugenio Dittborn, Jean-Luc Godard, Félix González-Torres, Chris Marker, Antoni Muntadas, and Doris Salcedo, a memory understood not as a reconstitutive sequence of a lineal past, but as a nucleus of temporalities criss-crossed with dissimilar and contradictory rhythms that struggle in the development of time. Thus, more than a project of remembrance of what has disappeared, *Lugares de la memoria* represents an analysis of the forgotten, both by official amnesia and by personal memory. And the works of the artists involved sought to be fragments of humanity without any desire of nostalgia, seeking to connect social memory and intimate memory, political memory and artistic memory.<sup>9</sup> From another point of view, in *After Architecture. Tipologías*

8 Andreas HUYSEN, “Aplicaciones transnacionales del discurso del holocausto y el colonialismo”, in Anna Maria GUASCH (ed.), *La memoria del otro en la era de lo global* (exhibition catalogue), Bogotá, Museo de Arte de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 10 September–7 November 2009, p. 26.

9 José Miguel G. CORTÉS, *Lugares de la memoria* (exhibition catalogue), Castelló, Espai d’Art Contemporani de Castelló (EACC), 2001, p. 59.

*del después*<sup>10</sup> [After Architecture. Typologies of Afterwards], Martí Peran, in relation to the narrative of modern time that organised architecture as special planning of a hegemonic Great Dream, argues that there have been “infinite entropic movements that dissolve their plans, become parasites on their own bodies, reverse their intentions, and recycle their remains”. Xavier Arenós, Gregor Graf, Mounir Fatmi, Xavier Monteys, Heidrun Holzfeind, Tim Etchells, Laurent Malone/Dennis Adams, Didier Bay, Jordi Colomer, Alexander Apóstol, Chris Mottalini, Lara Almarcegui, and Clay Ketter, among others, contemplated the multiple dissolutions that accompanied the modern project, providing the injection of real time onto the architectonic container. As Peran indicates:

This is the precise inflection in which we wanted to situate our reflection; in the little slip that separates architecture as premeditated planning from a single goal and that which occurs in the afterwards of architecture once it enters the plurality of real times: *After Architecture*. To develop this title, we propose to distinguish up to four possible typologies of afterwards: Back, Interior, Around, and Demolition.<sup>11</sup>

## Memory and history

At times, these cosmopolitan memories are mixed up with what we would call a historical operation or historiographic turn, as Mark Godfrey notes in “The Artist as Historian”.<sup>12</sup> In this line, and as argued by the artist and theorist Joachim Koester,<sup>13</sup> if in the nineteenth century exploration was geographical in the search for the unknown and in the twentieth it went inwards (the exploration of the unconscious by Freud, of language by Gertrude Stein, and of the mind by Henri Michaux), in the twenty-first century it is oriented backwards — and not outwards or inwards — which is to say, towards the past. In this way, in recent years, above all stemming from the events of September 11, 2001 and the Iraq War, there has been a growing nostalgia for a historicist art that,

10 Martí PERAN (ed.), *After Architecture: Tipologías del después* (exhibition catalogue), Barcelona, Arts Santa Mònica and Actar, 2009.

11 Martí PERAN (ed.), *After Architecture: Tipologías del después*.

12 Mark GODFREY, “The Artist as Historian”, in *October* (no. 120, Spring 2007, pp. 140-172).

13 Dieter ROELSTRAETE, “After the Historiographic Turn: Current Findings”, in *e-flux* (no. 6, May 2009). Available at [www.e-flux.com/journal/06/61402/after-the-historiographic-turn-current-findings/](http://www.e-flux.com/journal/06/61402/after-the-historiographic-turn-current-findings/) (consulted 25 March 2019).

as Miguel Ángel Hernández points out, would consider two models of historical practice: parallel history and alterative history, which would move towards a deconstruction of the modes in which history has been developed, showing its blind spots and its artificiality.<sup>14</sup> For his part, Martí Peran in *Futuros abandonados. Mañana ya era la cuestión*<sup>15</sup> [Abandoned futures. Tomorrow Was Already the Question], in the face of the museographic drive and the archaeological obsession that seems to characterise a good part of contemporary culture, opts for the need to rehabilitate the utopian tradition, the capacity to imagine radical futures, and to re-encounter in the past those possibilities that remain available.

Politics and testimonial in relation to one of the biggest genocides of recent years, that of Rwanda in 1994, is found in the work of **Alfredo Jaar** (Santiago, Chile, 1956): How to provoke — the artist asks — the emotional response of the viewer in a culture accustomed to generalising images of violence and cruelty? How to represent, without denouncing yet at the same time denouncing, the tragedy of exploitation? How to confront and transform the conventionalised images of brutality spread by mass media? How to adequately transfer the enormity and the weight of injustice and mass murder? The artistic response to these questions is offered by Alfredo Jaar, expressed in photography that generates meanings, photography not only as the bearer of truth but also penetrated by the imagination, emotional commitment, and aesthetic transformation. To do this, Jaar and his assistant Carlos Vasquez visited Rwanda in 1994, where they took more than three thousand photographs, a veritable cemetery of images about the genocide carried out by the Hutu majority on the Tutsi minority, which provided the main body of their *The Rwanda Project* (1994–2000), whose first expression was a work created in the autumn of 1994, *Rwanda, Rwanda*, which consisted of placing eight advertisements with the word “RWANDA” in advertising hoardings in the Swedish city of Malmö, highlighting to the public the lack of attention from the communications media to the genocide in Africa. From his experiences in the location and his photographs, in 1995 Jaar developed the installation *Real Pictures*, which

<sup>14</sup> Miguel Ángel HERNÁNDEZ-NAVARRO, *Materializar el pasado: El artista como historiador (benjaminiano)*, Murcia, Micromegas, 2012, p. 37.

<sup>15</sup> The show includes works by artists such as Xavier Arenós, Anna Artaker, Joan Bennàssar Cerdà, Jordi Colomer, Eva Fàbregas, Claire Fontaine, Gustav Klucis, Jordi Mitjà, Dani Montlleó, Societé Réaliste, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Todo por la Praxis, and Oriol Vilanova, who follow the motto of not respecting the linearity of time, essential for being able to create freely the form of updating very specific episodes of a promising past. See *Futuros abandonados: Mañana ya era la cuestión* (exhibition catalogue), Barcelona, Centre d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona Fabra i Coats, 18 October 2014–18 January 2015.

consisted of six minimalist sculptures, each of which was made up of 372 black boxes in the style of photographic portfolio boxes. And each one of these linen-lined boxes contained a print of Rwanda that could not be seen. The only thing that could be seen were the words written in white with the place, the date, and a description of the photograph inside the box.

Explaining this impossibility of seeing the images and the detail of the tragedy, Jaar said that he had always been concerned about the disjunction between experience and that which can be registered photographically. In the case of Rwanda, the huge disjunction and the tragedy that could not be represented. He said that this is when he discovered the truth that the tragedy is in the feelings, words, and ideas of that people, and not in their images.<sup>16</sup>

The photographs are thus encountered buried, exactly in direct proportion to their effective ineffectiveness, and it can only be the artist himself who decides to reveal certain of them, as occurred in *Embrace* (1995), where he showed four different photographs of the same scene: three youths with their backs to the camera in a refugee camp who hugged each other while looking at something (presumably horrific) situated outside the photo, which prevents us from seeing it. A second motif/design was shown in 1996, in the work *The Eyes of Gutete Emerita*, an installation presented in two separate spaces: in one of them the viewer could see backlit horizontal sentences at the level of the gaze. The first part of the text introduced in a general way the Rwandan genocide, while the second part focused on an episode of the personal fate of Gutete Emerita, who survived the massacre in the church of Ntarama and provides the artist with a first-hand testimony. The second space, a big light table with a million photographic slides — the number of victims of the genocide — which repeat a single image of Gutete's eyes looking directly at the camera, is a metaphor of the number of Rwandans who died in the 1994 massacre. The effect of the grey mountain of slides seen from a certain distance resembles a pile of ashes, which evokes destruction and absence. According to Jaar, Gutete's eyes look into our eyes and are full of the meaning that we reject.<sup>17</sup>

Totally against presenting images of the slaughter, in 1997 Jaar designed a real archive of them, in this case 2,158 photos from *LIFE* magazine which embodied the perception of Africa in Western media over a period of 60 years.

<sup>16</sup> Rubén GALLO, "Representations of Violence — Violence of Representation. An Interview with Alfredo Jaar", in *Trans* (nos. 3-4, 1997, p. 57).

<sup>17</sup> Steffen HAUG, "Rwanda", in *Alfredo Jaar: The Way It Is: An Aesthetics of Resistance* (exhibition catalogue), Berlin, NGBK, Berlinische Galerie, and Alte Nationalgalerie, 15 June–17 September 2012, pp. 297–305.

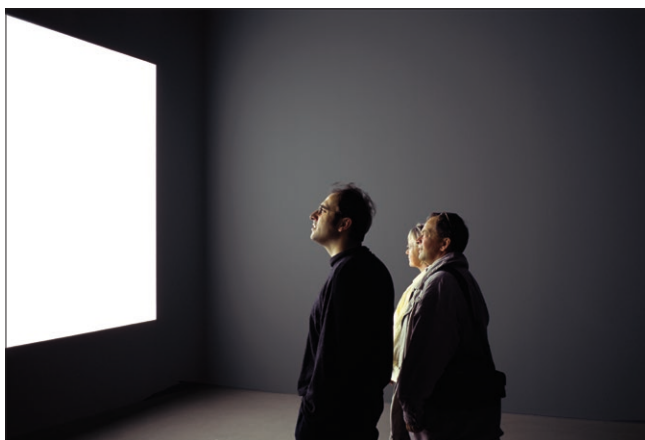
*Searching for Africa in LIFE* (1996) is a diachronic narrative of a political map riddled with blind spots, a partial representation of reality, which enables Jaar once more to show the condition of Africa as a “dark continent”, “a distant speck on the horizon of our imagination”, which relegates a whole continent to invisibility. Using the same strategy, Jaar created another memorialist reference to Rwanda in the installation *The Silence of Nduwayezu* (1997), a work which, in the words of Patrik Nyberg,<sup>18</sup> could be both interpreted in dialogical relation with other works that deconstructed the rhetoric of the communications media and considered as a proposition of an alternative aesthetic politics. The piece consists of the presentation of the eyes — shown in the foreground — of a five-year-old Tutsi boy called Nduwayezu who witnessed the death of his parents and whom the artist found in a refugee camp in Rubavu. As Jaar puts it: “His eyes were the saddest eyes I had ever seen, so I wanted to represent that and speak about his silence. Because his silence refers to the silence of the world community that let this happen.”<sup>19</sup> He also showed a million slides of Nduwayezu’s eyes piled up on a huge light table which ones again pointed to the blindness of the images, thus ensuring that the repetitive nature of the work had an effect that was quite contrary to the interminable flood of scenes in the media, which erase the horrors of each photograph with a new one.

Jaar’s desire to keep alive the memory of Rwanda extended in works of 2008 (the photographic series *Kigali*) and 2010 (the video installation based on a speech given by Bill Clinton at Kigali airport in 1998 when he visited Rwanda and entitled *We Wish to Inform You That We Didn’t Know*), although he had earlier projected his memorialist intention in other works, such as *The Lament of Images* (2002) and *The Sound of Silence* (2006), in which he incorporated large rectangular light screens empty of any image which blinded the gaze of the spectator and obliged him to read the text that accompanied the works in other rooms. In the case of *The Lament of Images* (fig. 30) the references were towards the years Mandela spent in prison in Cape Town, to the acquisition of the Bettmann historical archive (with more than 17 million documentary images) by Bill Gates, and to the purchase of satellite images of Afghanistan by the US Defense Department. In the case of *The Sound of Silence* (2006) (fig. 31), reference was made to the press photograph taken during the Sudan famine by the

18 Patrik NYBERG, “From repetition to duration — On the silence of Nduwayezu and the political aesthetics of Alfredo Jaar”, in *Alfredo Jaar: Tonight No Poetry Will Serve* (exhibition catalogue), Kiasma (Finland), Museum of Contemporary Art, 11 April–7 September 2014, pp. 237–239.

19 Interview with Alfredo Jaar in *Art21*. See [www.art21.org/texts/alfredo-jaar/interview-alfredo-jaar-the-rwanda-project](http://www.art21.org/texts/alfredo-jaar/interview-alfredo-jaar-the-rwanda-project) (consulted 20 December 2014).

South African photo-journalist Kevin Carter in March 1993, for which he received the Pulitzer Prize in 1994. Projected onto a cube of light (an abstract surface of light) were phrases and sometimes words written in white on a black background in which the above-mentioned photograph periodically appeared and disappeared as a kind of flash of memory, a moment that the artist exploited to reflect on the political, economic, and ethical use of press photographs today.



**Figure 30.** Alfredo Jaar, *The Lament of Images* (2002). Courtesy of Galerie Lelong, New York; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk; Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the artist.



**Figure 31.** Alfredo Jaar, *The Sound of Silence* (2006). Galería Oliva Arauna, Madrid; Kamel Mennour, Paris; Galerie Lelong, New York; Galerie Thomas Schulte, Berlin; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, and the artist.

Other artists — such as Krzysztof Wodiczko, Dennis Adams, Doris Salcedo, Óscar Muñoz, José Alejandro Restrepo, and Francesc Torres — respond to the question: How do artistic visualisations of past and present events create and reveal a sense of history that traditional historiographic methods cannot provide? These artists present us with a set of works in which the author, more than illustrating historical events, inquires about the interconnected creation and visualisation of the layers of time and their potential to reveal connections with a given present.

Although the work of **Krzysztof Wodiczko** (Warsaw, 1943), and in particular that of the 1980s and 1990s, maintains a close link with the public space, which he illuminates with his projections onto the facades of urban architecture to explore the dynamic of the monument and the anti-monument, his work most related to war, conflict, trauma, and memory was developed in the first decade of the twenty-first century. In 2005, Wodiczko started to develop projections for interiors of cultural spaces as a metaphor for the psychological isolation of society in relation to social and political experience. One of the first examples was the installation *If You See Something* (2005), presented at the Lelong gallery in New York, followed by two new projects in 2009, *Out of Here: The Veterans Project* (Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, 2009) and *Guests* (fig. 32), in the Polish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, in which he continued to show his sensitivity to the problems of various groups that are disadvantaged in the framework of global capitalism. In this respect, Andrzej Turowski detects in his works “a critique of history in which the concepts of function, progress, altruism, ‘the Other’, security, and so on are seen as ideological components of the social vision of political power”,<sup>20</sup> and Peter



**Figure 32.** Krzysztof Wodiczko, *Guests* (2009).

<sup>20</sup> Andrzej TUROWSKI, “Wodiczko and Poland in the 1970s”, in VARIOUS AUTHORS, *Krzysztof Wodiczko*, London, Black Dog, 2011, p. 23.

Boswell says that “Wodiczko’s subversion consists in his illuminating and focusing on topics that authorities would prefer to leave in the dark, dormant and unexamined”.<sup>21</sup>

In *Guests* (2009), the artist constructed a network of significant relationships that reflect the position of the immigrant within the reception country (Poland). In the pavilion, in darkness, windows were projected onto the walls and the ceiling, creating the impression that behind them were people presented as opaque and blurred silhouettes. Some were carrying out simple physical jobs: sweeping the ground, picking up leaves, washing windows. Others were seen talking among themselves or on the telephone, approaching the surface of the window and touching it with their hands, or simply standing, as if they were waiting for something. The bluish white colour of the projects lent the space a subdued and cold light.

The different nuances of the work are left to be intuited through its title: *Guests*. At first sight, to be a guest seems to be a pleasant circumstance, enjoyed by someone who is given hospitality, welcomed. But at the same time to be a guest, an eternal guest, means having no home. Or, at least, not feeling as if one is in one’s own place, to which one has a right; it implies that one can never take decisions, but has always to follow already existing rules. Wodiczko indicates a similar situation in the case of immigrants. Referring to them by using a euphemism such as guests is an approach that hides, under a false cordiality, the belief in one’s own superiority. It is a way of denying equal rights to the immigrant while pretending to have an open attitude. Thus, already in the title the artist allows the intuition of the complexity of the situation of an immigrant — welcomed and rejected at the same time — an argument that he explores throughout the whole structure of the work.

Wodiczko’s projects, such as the already mentioned *Out of Here: The Veterans Project* (2009–2011) or in *Abraham Lincoln: War Veteran Projection* (2012), are not so much about creating the memory of the past as the memory of the present, of saving that which is perilously approaching oblivion: the present lives that nobody recalls. Nonetheless, the salvation of these experiences also allows the recuperation of the past of these marginal groups, which can be achieved only if they recover their own voice. “Your speech has no past and

21 Peter BOSWELL, “Krzysztof Wodiczko: Art and the Public Domain”, in VARIOUS AUTHORS, *Public Address: Krzysztof Wodiczko*, Minneapolis, Walker Art Center, 11 October 1992–3 January 1993; Houston, Contemporary Arts Museum, 22 May–22 August 1993 (Minneapolis, Walker Art Center, 1992, pp. 8–25).

will have no power over the future of the group: why should one listen to it?"<sup>22</sup> is how Kristeva explains why foreigners are not listened to in the society in which they arrive. In effect, their voice does not have the same weight, whether legal, social, or cultural. They can be listened to as a curiosity, but it is not an expression of equal validity. The word of the foreigner that Wodiczko shows in his work is that which, in the public space, does not have its fixed place. The word is, thus, another guest in Wodiczko's work.

At the same time, the word is that which allows the immigrant to be detected: a different accent, errors, lack of vocabulary. All the people recorded by Wodiczko tell their stories not in their own languages but in that of the country to which they have come or in the lingua franca of the modern world, English. This highlights their linguistic uprooting, one of the most important aspects of the uprooting linked to immigration. Similarly, deprived of the possibility of the daily use of their own language and, moreover, often without the opportunity to learn the new one well, immigrants seem separated from full participation in the reality that surrounds them. Kristeva uses a series of metaphors to describe the coexistence of the two languages in the life of an immigrant:

To carry within yourself like a secret crypt or like a handicapped child — loved and useless — the language of once-upon-a-time that fades and won't make up its mind to leave you ever. You learn to use another instrument, like expressing yourself in algebra or on the violin. You can become a virtuoso in this new artifice that provides you with a new body, just as false, sublimated — some would say sublime.<sup>23</sup>

**Dennis Adams** (Des Moines, Iowa, 1948), from his works at the end of the 1970s, centres on the notion of invisibility in the processes of constructing historical memory, as is shown in the series of works carried out in the public space and entitled *Bus Shelter* (1983-1988), in which he combined photographic elements (images taken from the media) and elements of street furniture (bus shelters, kiosks, advertising panels). In a questioning of the conventional relationships between architecture, photography, and advertising texts, Adams evokes controversial episodes in historical memory, and always according to the context of what happened. In *Bus Shelter II* (1986), located at the junction of 14th Street and Third Avenue in New York, Adams presented in a bus shelter photographs of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, accused by the US government

22 Julia KRISTEVA, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, p. 279.

23 Julia KRISTEVA, *Strangers to Ourselves*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1991, p. 15.

of spying and executed by electric chair in 1953. The portrait of Klaus Barbie and his lawyer Jacques Verges was shown in similar bus shelters in the German city of Münster in *Bus Shelter IV* (1987). And in *Bus Shelter VIII* (1988), located in one of the busiest streets in Toronto, Adams provided a light box with photographic images of a group of Canadian First Nations people protesting in front of the façade of the parliament in Ottawa.

In later works, Adams focuses on various episodes of colonial history, such as the Algerian uprising against colonial French domination in the period between 1953 and 1962. In a work of 2005, the video *Make Down [Take Two]*, (fig. 33) Adams starts out from the initial sequence of Gillo Pontecorvo's film *La Battaglia di Algeri* [The Battle of Algiers] (1966), in which three Algerian women, activists of the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) and divested of their traditional clothing, prepare to attack the French colonisers in the middle of the international community. Starting from the idea of camouflage (that of the Algerian women who remove their veils, change their hairstyles, put on make-up, and wear Western clothes), Adams centres on the face: the visible part of the body, its face and the shoulders, appear covered by a layer of dark green make-up which evokes military camouflage.<sup>24</sup> As A. Sbriccoli argues, *Make Down* recovers the past of the Algerian nation, the rising up of a people against colonial French occupation, as was represented in the stills from *The Battle of Algiers*.



**Figure 33.** Dennis Adams, *Make Down [Take Two]* (2005).

<sup>24</sup> See Ada SBRICCOLI, "Dennis Adams: *Make Down [Take Two]*", in Anna Maria GUASCH (ed.), *La memoria del otro*, p. 165.

The work of **Doris Salcedo** (Bogotá, 1958), above all her sculptures made from fragments of furniture and clothes, becomes a kind of counter-memoir that invites the recomposing of fragments of the political situation of her native Colombia, in most cases united to the grief and trauma of a country, but without renouncing the most intimate and poetic aspects of existence:

Each piece refers, as the artist affirms, to this specific experience of violence in the civil war which constitutes an intrinsic part of life in the Colombian countryside. In Colombia, it is assumed that this is invisible, above all in the countryside. Every witness of the violent death of a loved one lives the tragedy and their life is defined by this encounter with death. [...] My work speaks of the human experience taken to the absurd by violence, insensitivity, and fragility.<sup>25</sup>

This is seen in various installations, such as *Atrabilarios* (1992-1993), a set of shoe boxes, shoes that were once footwear for a group of *desaparecidos* ["disappeared" people] of which a kind of print is kept with the aim of connecting the object to the reality of each individual subject. The artist recovers the original meaning of an adjective that is now rarely used (*atrabilario* [irritable, bad-tempered]), which derives from the Latin *atra bilis*, associated with mourning and at the same time alluding to Freud's definition of melancholia as a form of mourning, characterised by the loss of the loved object.<sup>26</sup>

In later works, such as the series *La Casa Viuda* [The Widowed House] (1992-1995), Salcedo continues to evoke the feeling of loss that has occurred in a place repudiated by the violence of the civil war, terrorism, and drug trafficking. The title of the set of installations refers not to the house of a widow but to the house as a widow, an expression used in Colombia to designate those houses whose inhabitants have been taken away, "disappeared", or murdered, leaving behind the traces of daily life (traces that we can see not on the body of the victims but in the prints that they have left on the furniture or in the clothes that belonged to them): it is like registering the human presence through absence and the feeling of loss. The pieces of *La Casa Viuda* are made with bits of doors that are merged with other elements of domestic furniture and placed in the exhibition space in such a way that they transform it into a room. As Joan Gibbons argues, more than moving among works of art, the visitor to her exhibitions is invited to live in the space and interact emotionally with her works,

25 José Miguel G. CORTÉS, *Lugares de la memoria*, p. 103.

26 See Joan GIBBONS, *Contemporary Art and Memory: Images of Recollection and Remembrance*, London and New York, I.B. Tauris, 2007, p. 59.

becoming part of the tensions generated between the objects and the space. And from a political perspective, what ends up being produced is a set of counter-memories that, despite their obfuscation, evoke the disappeared or the dead. The works would thus act as acts of resistance that refer to what Foucault calls popular memory in opposition to hegemonic memory.<sup>27</sup>

A key work of fellow Colombian Óscar Muñoz (Popayán, Colombia, 1951) is *Proyecto para un memorial* [Project for a Memorial], which refers to two earlier projects, *Narcisos* (1994–2000) and *Reltrato*. *Narcisos* begins with the difficulty of fixing the image, a circumstance related directly to memory and to the problem of retaining and pinpointing it. These are works carried out with a serigraphic screen previously processed photographically with the artist's portrait. Once the trays are filled with water, the screens are placed, charcoal is passed through the silk, and the powder falls in some places and not in others, thereby configuring the image. It is left floating on the surface of the water, and from there begins the process of evaporation and transformation, exposed to accidents and contingencies: the climate, humidity, the atmosphere, a series of variables that mean that what a viewer sees one day will not be seen by a different viewer the next day, in process in which the artist can no longer intervene: "At this time I can no longer control things, in a way that there is a kind of metaphor for creation, life, and death in these processes, when the powder touches the water and makes the image."

A new step forward in this kind of reflection is represented by the video *Reltrato* (2003). Here we see an image (hand-drawn by the artist) which is at the point of disappearing and then returns, although it remains fragile and never takes a definite form. The artist draws with water, and the heat of the sun evaporates the image before it is finished. The portrait can never be seen in its totality, and the use of water serves to point to the transitory nature of human existence. Nonetheless, it was not until a later work — *Proyecto para un memorial* [Project for a Memorial] (2005) — that Muñoz more openly puts forward the question of memory and remembrance (in this case, the people who disappeared mysteriously in his own country, Colombia), and specifically the difficulty of remembering. The work consists of five synchronised videos with 15-inch screens in which he no longer paints his own image but incessantly draws the faces of the others, of those *desaparecidos*, who at the same time incessantly disappear. Both in this and in other works, such as *Aliento* [Breath] (1996–1997), Muñoz has collected the faces of his compatriots from the obituary sec-

27 Joan GIBBONS, *Contemporary Art and Memory: Images of Recollection and Remembrance*, p. 63.

tion of newspapers (only faces without a name, without the story of their lives) and has engraved them on small steel plates, so that they appear only when the viewer approaches them and gives them life with her or her breath. There seems to be a clear relation to Freud's magic board — a device that involves a board with resin or wax and a piece of paper where everything can be written and erased with a simple movement of the hand, an exterior model of the psychic apparatus of registering and memorising: the outside of memory as internal record keeping.

For **José Alejandro Restrepo** (Paris, 1959), history is not an objective discipline but is highly subjective, fictitious, and accommodated to the interests of power. As the artist claims, to make history is like editing a film, in the sense that what is primary is the act of assembling facts by cutting, selecting, and seeking an artificial linearity while silencing all that does not fit into the system. A rereading of history starting from a re-editing of objective facts to generate another selection, another emphasis, another focus of observation. As Cuauhtémoc Medina argues, José Alejandro Restrepo provides the evidence of an ambivalent everyday theophany: the form in which, on television channels and in daily newspapers in Colombia, the violence and public hallucinations are wrapped in a Catholic iconography that ties pain or tragedy to a ritual and symbolic frame.<sup>28</sup> Restrepo works in a kind of infinite archive in which he collects all kinds of news related to the history of Colombia: massacres, police and political spectacles, suicide attempts, funeral processions, acts of purification in the street, together with images of a baroque religiosity captured in prints, etchings, paintings, and altarpieces. This is shown in his works and exhibitions of the 1990s, such as *El paso de Quindío* [The Quindío Pass] (1992), *Musa paradisiaca* [Paradisiacal Muse] (1997), *El cocodrilo de Humboldt no es el cocodrilo de Hegel* [Humboldt's Crocodile Is Not Hegel's Crocodile] (1998), *Iconomia* (2000), and *TransHistorias—Historia y mito en la obra de José Alejandro Restrepo* [Trans-Histories—History and Myth in the Work of José Alejandro Restrepo] (2001–2002). But perhaps the closest — even defiant and violent — relationship between the double space of religion and politics is unleashed in later video and performance works, such as the single-channel videos *Viacrucis* and *Santoral* (both 2004), the video *Protomártires* [Proto-martyrs] (2007), the performance *Vidas ejemplares* [Exemplary Lives] (2008), and the video installation *Santo Job*

28 Cuauhtémoc MEDINA, "De la encarnación como dominio", in María Belén SÁEZ DE IBARRA and José Alejandro RESTREPO (eds.), *Religión catódica: José Alejandro Restrepo* (exhibition catalogue), Bogotá, Museo de Arte de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 10 March–30 April 2011, p. 72.

[Job] (2008) (fig. 34). *Viacrucis* (2004) is a good example of this superimposition of the religious, the political, and the public imaginary, which it depicts through careful processes of edition that become a reflection about the construction of the image: Who produces the image? Why is it produced? Who is it aimed at? With what intention? And, finally, what are the formal mechanisms that construct history? And always starting from the basis that it is the video that allows the carrying out of an intervention in the baroque repertoire of a “knowledge that writes on the body and with the body the ritualised messages of violence”.<sup>29</sup> In the words of the artist:



**Figure 34.** José Alejandro Restrepo, *Santo Job* (2008).

If history belongs to grammar, as the ancients held, here re-editing materials is an attempt to generate another writing and another narrative of our recent history. The steps to the cross are the stations of a redrawing between the sacred and the sordid, between the blessed and the bloody, between the earthly and the hallucinatory.<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand, in the performance *Vidas ejemplares* [Exemplary Lives] (2008), the artist used actors who incarnated and animated (in body and soul) some of the figures that are easily identified within the Catholic calendar of saints, such as St Barbara, St Lucia, St Agatha, St Rita, St Jerome, and St Bernard, and other anonymous figures who equally offer up their bodies voluntarily to violent rituals and sacrifices.

The work with memory of **Francesc Torres** (Barcelona, 1948) began with the 1991 installation *Amnesia-Memoria* [Amnesia-Memory], a vindication of remembrance (but not a memorial) for a series of people, “libertarians, tireless

29 José Alejandro RESTREPO, *Cuerpo gramatical: Cuerpo, arte y violencia*, Bogotá, Universidad de los Andes, 2006, p. 21.

30 María Belén SÁEZ DE IBARRA and José Alejandro RESTREPO (eds.), *Religión catódica: José Alejandro Restrepo*, p. 56.

resistance fighters, victims of Francoism, men who would today be over seventy, over eighty”, against all the intensity of the “assassination of memory”. In Torres’ strategy, the historical sediment in its pure state is presented and transformed into art through an iconographic fixing (memory made of images, visual memory) because, as the artist says in a challenge to the role of the historian: “There cannot be historical awareness divorced from images. Historical awareness is essentially visual.”

Since works of the 1970s, his interest in memory has ventured into different historical contexts, whether some aspect of the political history of the Spanish state, and particularly the Civil War and the Franco dictatorship, or more recent delocalised or clearly global memories, or a dialogue between the two. One of his first incursions into this territory was produced as a result of the multimedia installation *Belchite/South Bronx. A Trans-Cultural and Trans-Historical Landscape* (1988), in which a theatre set based on wooden buildings with marks of destruction on their facades which created a ruin effect sought to highlight similarity between the abandoned streets of the New York area of the Bronx and the post-war ruins of the village of Belchite (Zaragoza), razed during the Spanish Civil War and later abandoned. As Torres himself wrote:

The premise upon which *Belchite/South Bronx* is based is an attempt to cast light on the suspicion that egoism and organised aggression cannot be explained within the context of the academic fray as their slow transformation into cultural material.<sup>31</sup>

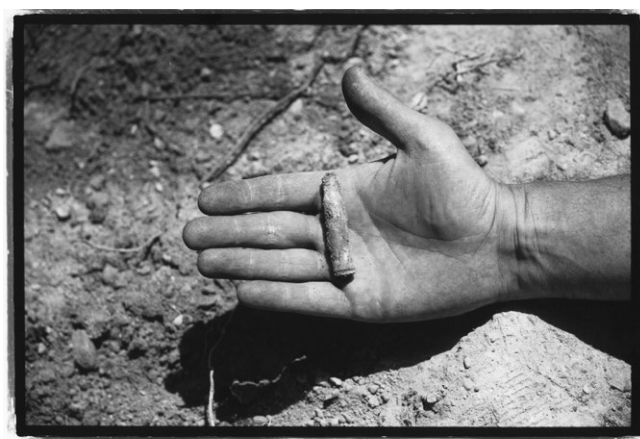
His interest in rescuing the historical past linked to the Spanish Civil War from oblivion led Torres to create new works, such as the series of eleven photographs *La visita de Munchausen* [The Munchausen Visit] (1987-2007), a return to the village of Belchite,<sup>32</sup> and the photographic installation *Oscura es la habitación donde dormimos* [Dark Is the Room Where We Sleep] (2004-2007) (fig. 35), the result of the documentation of the excavation of mass graves in Villamayor de los Montes and Burgos, and which marks a real inflection point in Torres’s work as, in his own words, it is the first time that he had conceived of a project without the deliberated intention that it would or would not be an

31 Francesc TORRES, “El fuego absoluto”, in *Francesc Torres: Da Capo* (exhibition catalogue), Barcelona, Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), 6 June–28 September 2008, pp. 69–70.

32 The work consists of a series of black-and-white photographs with a set of accessories abandoned after the shooting of Terry Gilliam’s film *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1988) in a place devastated by the Civil War and which Franco used in 1954 as propaganda to attack the republicans.

artwork: “It seemed to me that I should do this for the dignity of citizens. At that time, nobody was touching this subject, not even wearing kid gloves.”<sup>33</sup> In the text that the artist wrote for the presentation of this work at the International Center of Photography of New York in 2007, he claimed:

I do not know if, as Kundera says, the struggle for freedom is only the struggle for the right to ownership of history. I don’t know, but at least this should be an important part of this struggle as, if we are not the owners of our history, then what really belongs to us? Perhaps it is the reason why History in capital letters never ends up being the history of everything, because there is not one, there are many, and the only ones which are worthwhile are those that are suppressed.<sup>34</sup>



**Figure 35.** Francesc Torres, *Oscura es la habitación donde dormimos* (2004-2007).

A new traumatic event, in this case with a global dimension — the fall of the Twin Towers in New York in 2001<sup>35</sup> — led Francesc Torres to develop a new

33 Francesc Torres interview with Juan Vicente Aliaga, in *Ejercicios de memoria* (exhibition catalogue), Lleida, Centre d’Art La Panera, 26 January–24 April 2011, p. 147.

34 Francesc TORRES, “Oscura es la habitación donde dormimos”, in *Dark Is the Room Where We Sleep = Oscura es la habitación donde dormimos*, Barcelona, Actar, 2007, pp. 12-25.

35 In the 2010 text “La incertidumbre tangibilizada” [Tangible Uncertainty], Torres wrote: “September 11, 2011 occurred a few days after I had started to dismount my studio in New York to bring it to Barcelona. Because of that, in the early morning I was in an apartment on the twelfth floor of a building sited very close to the corner of Cortlandt and Broadway, just three hundred metres from the World Trade Center. At 08.46, the twentieth century ended abruptly, the century that had started in Sarajevo in 1914.” See Francesc Torres, “La incertesa tangibilitzada”, in *Certesa simulada: Noves fronteres de la ciència, l’art i el pensament*, Barcelona and Badalona, Arts Santa Mònica and Ara Llibres, 2010, pp. 194-199.

work *Memoria fragmentada. 11-S NY. Artefactos del Hangar 17* [Fragmented Memory. 11-S NY. Artefacts of Hangar 17] (2011) (fig. 36), based on his photographic experience in one of the hangars of John F. Kennedy airport in which thousands of objects were deposited by a group of architects and engineers who had found them among the ruins of the World Trade Center in the wake of the September 11 attacks. The specific place was a disused hangar, number 17, at New York's Kennedy airport, a space blessed with a singularity and a visual and emotional power that would be difficult to surpass, a place closed to visitors. Torres was finally able to enter inside and the result of intense months of work was a total of 176 images projected through micro-screens that situate us in part of the Francesc Torres's lengthy photographic work that links historical memory to national, social, and individual memory.



**Figure 36.** Francesc Torres, *Memoria fragmentada. 11-S NY. Artefactos del Hangar 17* (2011).

The project has two aspects. On the one hand, it documented the hangar as a museum archive produced by an emergency organisational logic developed by the curators of such an unprecedented collection. On the other hand, it covered the contents, that had acquired an additional dimension as totemic substitutes for the victims of the attack.

In relation to an earlier work — *Oscura es la habitación donde dormimos*, which documents the exhumation of the remains of 46 civilians murdered by fascist units during the Spanish Civil War — this work narrated the intent to recover the presence of the victims, who disappeared leaving no trace, in the objects obtained in the place of the attacks and now preserved in Hangar 17. As the artist writes:

This project attempts to capture Hangar 17 as a narrative artifact in its own right, as well as its significance as one of the most extraordinary experiments in the

preservation of contemporary history since World War II. The basis of this work rests on a thorough but selective photographing of the holdings. On the one hand, I captured general images of the uniqueness of the environment: the hangar, its location, areas not in use, remains of its time as an airline terminal. These images are revealing in how, in specific circumstances, a museum can spontaneously emerge as an organic entity in the most unlikely places.

He continued:

On the other hand, I attempted to capture what could be, perhaps, blurred by a conventional museum setting. In seeing, choosing, and editing through the camera lens, photographers can steer visitors to an exhibition, or readers to a procession of images. Consequently, as a methodology, I proceeded by going from macroenvironment to micro-detail, from the general to the particular, from the atmosphere of the site to the texture of the beams, and the volcanic quality of the scorched material that resulted from the collapse of the towers.<sup>36</sup>

In the face of this radical absence of visual traces, as surprising as seeing a field without dead bodies after a battle, the objects stored in JFK's Hangar 17 take on a special power as intermediaries between the victims, citizens, the political environment, and the constant threat of this environment, as well as making it the totem, following structuralist anthropology, establishing the connection between the individual, the clan, ancestors, and the constant threat of the natural environment. To document all this taking into account that it is a temporary solution that is already coming to its end (the board of the Memorial and Museum have already chosen the pieces they want and the rest will start to be dispersed among institutions in the whole country) turned it into a need that is certainly historical.

And Torres continued: "In this case it does not try to make history, but to transform it into an emotional material deliberately articulated to move, something that the historical narrative does not always do."<sup>37</sup>

In a terrain where history, archaeology, anthropology, museology, and art come together, the uncertainty implicit in all the processes that make up life

<sup>36</sup> Francesc TORRES, "The Museum of Unnatural History", in Francesc TORRES, *Memory Remains: 9/11 Artifacts at Hangar 17*, Washington (D. C.), National Geographic, 2011, pp. 11-13.

<sup>37</sup> Francesc TORRES, "The Museum of Unnatural History", in Francesc TORRES, *Memory Remains: 9/11 Artifacts at Hangar 17*, Washington (D. C.), National Geographic, 2011, pp. 11-13 [Spanish edition: "Escombros de la Memoria/Los Restos del 11S en el Hangar 17", in *Arquitectura Viva* (no. 138, Autumn 2011, pp. 72-75)].

in its biological, cultural, and political aspects, Torres's interest in historical memory is repeated in new works such as the installation *What Does History Know of Nail Biting?*, presented in the Davis Museum of Wellesley College in Boston in 2015. This is an installation with previously unseen films of the passage of the Lincoln Brigade through Spain, which takes its title from a sentence in the novel *Darkness At Noon* by writer Arthur Koestler, in which he argues that history is a priori amoral, a living organism without conscience. There is no pity in history: only the totalitarian nature of the event that condemns the human being to his fate. But what in fact inspired this work of Torres was the finding of unreleased film shot over a period of two years (1937-1938) by a member of the International Brigade who fought with the republican forces: the American Harry Randall, a photographer and cameraman who captured everyday scenes of some members of the brigade in the dead times before going into combat. The installation consists of three projections: the central one shows the original film, and the lateral ones offer a series of portraits of the volunteers with their names printed in red, repeated but inverting the order of the sequence.

As the artist argues, the work functions on two levels: on the one hand, as an archaeology of one of the most important aspects of the Spanish Civil War — the presence of American members of the International Brigade in Spain — and as a meditation on the fragility implicit in the processes of preserving the historical events, in particular those which are left in the margin by the canonical historical narratives. And, on the other hand, most importantly, the work would function, as in many other works by Torres on historical memory, as a visual sedimentation of history beyond specific historical episodes: it would be about commenting on the material fragmentation, both in a literal and a metaphorical sense, which sleeps silently beneath the official narrative of history.<sup>38</sup>

Francesc Torres's work connects with the growing interest by a younger generation of Spanish artists in working with the forgetting of the historical past, an amnesia which, according to Juan Vicente Aliaga in the catalogue of the exhibition *Ejercicios de memoria* [Memory Exercises] (2011), refers not only to the period 1936-1939 and the time between the triumph of Francoism and 1975, but which would also include the so-called Transition, the period during which the 1977 Amnesty Law was approved.<sup>39</sup> To give answers to questions

<sup>38</sup> Francesc Torres, unpublished text provided by the artist.

<sup>39</sup> Juan Vicente ALIAGA, "That which some people still do not wish to see. To think of the past and recent history; to politically recover historical memory through artistic work", in *Ejercicios de memoria* (exhibition catalogue), Lleida, Centre d'Art La Panera, 26 January–24 April 2011, p. 9.

such as “How to carry forward the work of making memory, of imposing an- amnesia, from artistic practice?” and “How to start this process within the Spanish state?”, Aliaga brought together a series of artists, apart from Torres himself: Francesc Abad (*El Camp de la Bota*, 2004), Joan Brossa (*El convidat*, 1986-1990), Rogelio López Cuenca (*Málaga 1937*, 2007), Pedro G. Romero (*Archivo F.X.; thesaurus: Células*, 1999-2010), Marcelo Expósito (*El año en el que el futuro acabó [comenzó]*, 2007), Ana Navarrete (*Nadie se acuerda de nosotras mientras estamos vivas. Muerte, represión y exilio, 1931-1941*, 2010), Ana Teresa Ortega (*Cartografías silenciadas*, 2007), María Ruido (*Plan Rosebud I: La escena del crimen*, 2008), Fernando Sánchez Castillo (*Arquitectura para el caballo*, 2002), and Montserrat Soto (*Memoria oral. Secreto 4*, 2000-2006).

## Cosmopolitan and transnational memories

It is under this globalisation of memory — which Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider term cosmopolitan memories<sup>40</sup> and which Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad call transnational memory<sup>41</sup> — that one would have to register a good number of artistic experiences of the last twenty years, some closer to documentary images, others to photojournalism, and others to history understood as an archive, but all with a common denominator: a way of understanding memory in its mobile dimension, beyond its local, regional, or national specifics; or also as a way of understanding globalisation as the era of increasing economic inequality or the era of the dislocation of the contemporary experience, a form of life that is closely linked to a certain mobility, as well as to related concepts such as migration, diaspora, nomadism, and the figure of the refugee.

According to Levy and Sznaider, in contrast to the heroic narrative of the first modernity, the so-called (active) narrative of the acting perpetrators, the paradigmatic narrative of the second modernity would become a (passive) nar-

40 Daniel LEVY and Natan SZNAIDER, “Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory”, in *European Journal of Social Theory* (vol. 5, no. 1, February 2002, pp. 87-106). In this text, the authors analyse various forms of collective memory in the era of globalisation from the study of the transition between national memories and cosmopolitan ones. After reviewing the role played by the Holocaust in Germany, Israel, and the United States in the last fifty years, the text analyses how the cosmopolitan refers to a process of internal globalisation through which the global becomes part of local experiences for a growing number of individuals.

41 Aleida ASSMANN and Sebastian CONRAD (eds.), *Memory in a Global Age*, Houndsmills and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

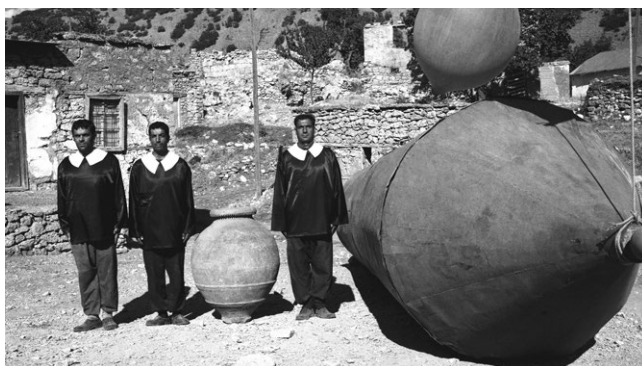
rative of non-acting victims. If in the first modernity the distinction between perpetrators and victims represented a crucial element of incomprehension and mutual disdain, in the second modernity one can detect a commitment based on mutual recognition of the history of the other. And it is this act of reconciliation that becomes a central mnemonic event. Half a century after the Holocaust, the atrocities have ceased to be the centre of attention, but the question is how the heirs of the victims, the perpetrators, and the spectators recycle their memories of the past. In other words, the recognition of the other erases the distinction between memories, victims, and perpetrators. What remains is the memory of a past shared by the fact of having incorporated the suffering of the other. Hence the pertinence of the concept of cosmopolitan memory, which corresponds to the horizon of experiences of the second modernity and which provides a new epistemological point of view that questions the methodological nationalism that still prevails in a good part of the social science.”<sup>42</sup>

Andreas Huyssen, citing Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider,<sup>43</sup> refers to a globalisation or cosmopolitanism of memory that analyses how the cultures of memory have shifted dimensions, from the national to the cosmopolitan. And it is thanks to this cosmopolitan memory — or, in other words, to transnational and transcultural memories — that we perceive the importance of local memories. Memory becomes a traveller: a journey that always takes place from a specific place and at a particular time. And in this journey the local seeks to confront the global.

As an example of these “glocal” memories, one can highlight the work of the Turkish artist **Kutluğ Ataman** (Istanbul, 1961), whose cycle *Mesopotamian Dramaturgies* (2009) reveals his obsession with the process of constructing personal or collective reality in order then to reflect on contemporary Turkey through the lens of the dualism represented by East and West, modernisation and tradition, globalisation and localism. In works of this series, such as the videos *Journey to the Moon* (fig. 37) and *Pursuit of Happiness*, the process of constructing identity is opened to the point at which it addresses concepts of history and geography, exploring how a nation constructs its own story. There is a very clear reference here to Turkey, a country that has passed from the Ottoman era to that of the republic experiencing a process of rapid modernisation, of a hegemonic nature, imposed from above, under the guidance of intellectu-

<sup>42</sup> See Daniel LEVY and Natan SZNAIDER, “Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory”, p. 106.

<sup>43</sup> Daniel LEVY and Natan SZNAIDER, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2005.



**Figure 37.** Kutluğ Ataman, *Journey to the Moon* (2009).

als in the name of the state. It is what Jonathan I. Israel defines as “enlightened despotism or radical enlightenment”.<sup>44</sup> As Ataman argues:

In Turkey, we have had a revolution in which it was decided that the alphabet had to be changed in one night, and that the national identity had to be occidental and secular. An attempt was made to create a nation with a violent ideology, which created major tensions. A process that led to the invention of a Turkish modernity, but also caused a sudden break with the tradition and the past, a genuine trauma in the cultural history of the country.<sup>45</sup>

Clearly, in the context, the word, the oral tradition, and language are fundamental: “I see people as constructions. Instead of walls and rooms, we have histories and experiences... And speaking is the only meaningful activity that we possess.”<sup>46</sup> He ascribes so much importance to speaking that it is the main event in his work: we find ourselves with characters who only speak, who narrate uninterrupted stories, rivers of works that are aimed at the viewer, trapping him: “Talking is the only meaningful activity we’re capable of.”<sup>47</sup> And he expands this concept still further: “Once we are no longer willing or allowed to tell our stories, we collapse into conformity.”<sup>48</sup> Ataman believes that we ex-

44 Jonathan I. ISRAEL, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002.

45 Kutluğ Ataman: *Mesopotamian Dramaturgies* (exhibition catalogue), Roma and Milano, MAXXI and Electa, 2010, p. 23

46 Kutluğ Ataman: *Mesopotamian Dramaturgies*, p. 82.

47 Saul ANTON, “1000 Words”, in *Artforum* (vol. 41, no. 6, February 2003, p. 117).

48 Ana Finel HONIGMAN, “What the Structure Defines: An Interview with Kutluğ Ataman”, in *Art Journal* (vol. 63, no. 1, Spring 2004, pp. 78-86).

ist thanks to our stories, to our mythologies; therefore, if we do not carry out the act of explaining them and verbalising them, they will cease to exist. The artist is thus interested both in personal histories and in how language functions in the context of the lives of his characters. Moreover, Ataman intentionally provides the gift of the word to women because he considers them to be more verbal: while men are traditionally more synthetic, women know how to talk about themselves more easily and more fluently.

From her student years, Fiona Tan (Pekanbaru, Indonesia, 1966) has been interested in the role of the camera — whether photographic or video — both for what it can capture and preserve and for what it can unleash in our imagination. Using archive material and her own creations, Tan constructs histories and insists on the viewer's role of witness, inviting him or her to establish a relationship that is collaborative rather than conspiratorial between object, image, context, and personal perception. Already in works such as the video projection *Facing Forward* (1999) (with archive material coming from an American expedition to Papua New Guinea at the beginning of the twentieth century with a dialogue between the Americans and the native tribes) or *Thin Cities* (1999-2000), with colonial archive material, the artist shows the dialectic between the objective truth derived from ethnography and the search for subjectivity of a personal travel notebook.

A fresh attempt to reflect on how photography and film are used as a social and anthropological instrument is shown in works in which she works directly rather than uses archive material: *Countenance* (four video projections, 2002) — a typological investigation, a remake of the unfinished work by photographer August Sander made up of two hundred faces of citizens of the two Germanies looking directly at the camera and the viewer — and *Correction* (2004), with 300 videoclips of prisoners and guards from four prisons in Illinois and California, in which she seeks to attract attention with two distinct kinds of argument: the amplification of distant and unintelligible human sounds and the magnification of small and involuntary human movements. The result? A catalogue of the dehumanising effects (affecting both the guards and the prisoners) of the procedures of imprisonment of the various penitentiary systems, beyond the specific place from which they originate.

One would situate the work of **Kader Attia** (Dugny, France, 1970), of Algerian origin although born and educated in France, in the spotlight between West and East. His project *The Repair from Occident to Extra Occidental Cultures* (2012) (fig. 38-39) starts from his own concept of cultural reappropriation of a concept forged on his journeys and stays in Algeria and in Kinshasa and Brazzaville in the Congo, where he was fascinated by African objects that had

been subjected to various restorations, not to return them to their original state but to add a new aesthetic element to them. Most of these “repairs” demonstrated how the meaning of objects and materials, far from maintaining their original specificity, were mixed historically and reflected an exchange of cultures, often in the context of colonial domination or in conflict zones. The busts that form part of the artist’s installations are inspired by photographic series of the faces of soldiers disfigured in the First World War, many of which were the result of a collaboration between the artist and traditional artisans in Bamako (Mali) and Brazzaville (Congo).<sup>49</sup>



**Figures 38-39.** Kader Attia, *The Repair from Occident to Extra Occidental Cultures* (2012).

49 See the exhibition *Kader Attia: Culture, Another Nature Repaired*, Antwerp, Middelheim Museum, 25 October 2014–29 March 2015.

The videos and photographs of the Lithuanian artist **Deimantas Narkevičius** (Utena, Lithuania, 1964), in their desire to reflect on individual and collective identity after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, are located in some place between an unpleasant present and a past that he does not recognise as his own. Starting from documentary film, but crossed by the double paradox of the subjectivity of painting and the special experience closer to the sculptural act, the artist projects us towards episodes of history and the collective memory and, in particular, makes constant references to monuments taken down after the new situation, always journeys with autobiographical elements, as in the film *His-tory* (1998), which blends history in capital letters (official history, History) with that of his domestic environment (story). All this impregnated with his considerable interest in the truth of history (hence the use of the word *pravda* [truth], which does not refer to the famous newspaper founded by Leon Trotsky that for 89 years acted as the official voice of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, but to names of local clubs of East Europe where one could get a fleeting glimpse of freedom of expression), oral histories, street histories, which he depicts through old equipment systems, projectors from the 1970s.

From the programmatic work *His-tory* onwards, the inscrutable course of history, and its tragicomic effects constitute the basic material that the artist uses for his conception of history as an oral narrative in which the acts of reconstruction, testimony, excavation, and recreation play a very important role, as we can see both in his films about the destruction and dismantlement of monuments to Lenin, Dzerzhinsky, and Gagarin of the now-finished social era, and in *Countryman* (2002), *Once in the XX Century* (2005), and *The Head* (2007) (fig. 40), a film developed with archive material that explains the history of the construction of a monument during the socialist era: the head of Karl Marx, created by the Soviet sculptor Lew Kerbel and erected in Chemnitz, in the German Democratic Republic in 1971. Both in this and in later works, such as *The Dud Effect* (2000), memory plays a central role in the mythical characteristics of both the experience of the past and that of the present; and this is tied to the origins and the biography of the artist, which guarantees him a privileged way of understanding a reality that, more than being a chronicle of the regimes of East Europe, is imbued with a melancholic re-reading of time: a time that has left behind a specific way of understanding history.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Chus MARTÍNEZ (ed.), *Deimantas Narkevičius: The Unanimous Life* (exhibition catalogue), Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 13 November 2008–28 May 2009.



**Figure 40.** Deimantas Narkevicius, *The Head* (2007).

## Memory and archive

As Arjun Appadurai observes, the archive has become a social tool that contributes to preserving and maintaining the collective memory, a neutral tool that tries to protect the greatest possible number of fragments of the past, the so-called “prestige of the past”,<sup>51</sup> a container to which people give life and whose emblem is the document. The concept of document, over time, has expanded to include artefacts, monuments, and cities (we are thinking of the work of institutions such as Unesco), until the point that there is now a huge gulf between the neuronal space of memory and its social location. While with Marc Bloch, the fundamental property of the archive was found in the “ideology of the signal”, with Foucault the neutrality of the archive was questioned along with the idea that it was a tool to preserve the contingent, the traces of the collective memory.<sup>52</sup>

Contemporary practices based on research, such as archives, consider more personal forms of explaining history that go beyond offering an objective presentation of it in terms of act, testimony, or document. Far from displaying the

<sup>51</sup> According to Maurice Halbwachs, in Arjun Appadurai, *Archive and Aspiration*, on line. Available at [https://kupdf.net/download/appadurai-archive-and-aspiration\\_5a155527e2b6f5231540698f\\_pdf](https://kupdf.net/download/appadurai-archive-and-aspiration_5a155527e2b6f5231540698f_pdf) (consulted 5 May 2019).

<sup>52</sup> See my in-depth study on archive in *Arte y archivo, 1920-2010: Genealogías, tipologías y discontinuidades*, Madrid, Akal, 2011, pp. 192-303, Akal Arte Contemporáneo, 29.

absolute truths that underpin official history, they weave imagined histories, creative anthropologies that — fully questioning the concepts of representation, authorship, and subjectivity — deploy various strategies within the framework of a deconstruction of official histories. In this line can be found the work of artists such as Pedro G. Romero, Daniel García Andújar, Montserrat Soto, Fernando Bruye, Rosàngela Rennó, The Atlas Group, and Francesc Abad, which we studied in depth in Chapter 6 of our book *Arte y archivo 1920-2010*<sup>53</sup> and which we will not repeat in this study.

## Memory and monument

How can artists or groups excluded from the public sphere give voice to commemorative forms today? What class of structures and rituals can be developed to counter the imposed monumentality of power? These and other questions represent the working axis of various artists, starting with Thomas Hirschhorn and ending with Chto Delat?, the Russian collective founded in 2003 which proposes that only through rituals located around certain spaces and through symbolic representations of the struggles in the past is it possible to unite activist politics, art, and activism.

This could be noted in the congress “What is Monument Today: The Politics of Memory at the Moment of Danger”,<sup>54</sup> in which artists and intellectuals proposed alternative models of monumentality from current perspectives of exclusion, starting from the neoliberal condition of freedom and the challenges in the conditions of life and the development of communication both geopolitical and intangible in the north and centre of Europe.

Also in the show *Nonument* (2014)<sup>55</sup> there was a re-evaluation of the language of the monument linked to the representations of historical events in the public space and, in particular, to a critique of places of memory in harmo-

<sup>53</sup> See Anna Maria GUASCH, *Arte y archivo, 1920-2010: Genealogías, tipologías y discontinuidades*, pp. 192-303. Also, the English version in Anna Maria GUASCH FERRER and Nasheli JIMÉNEZ DEL VAL, “Deconstruction, Relational Aesthetics and Techno-Cultural Networks: 1990-2010”, in Anna Maria GUASCH FERRER and Nasheli JIMÉNEZ DEL VAL (eds.), *Critical Cartography of Art and Visuality in the Global Age*, pp. 3-19.

<sup>54</sup> “What is Monument Today”, seminar organised by the European Artistic Research Network (EARN), Saint Petersburg, Smolny Institute, 10–11 October 2014.

<sup>55</sup> *Nonument* (exhibition catalogue), Barcelona, Convent dels Àngels, Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), 10 September 2014–8 February 2015. Curators: Bartomeu Marí and Josep Bohigas.

ny with the scepticism shown by historians towards the traditional function of the memorial. At a time when cultural symbols have been emptied of their political content, there is more and more sense in works based on a reformulation of the classic relations between the individual and the historical context, and oriented towards a new relationship with the environment. This prioritisation of individual affirmation, this subjectivation of reality in the framework of a political and social reflection on the monument characterised to a large extent all the works of the artists present in the show. This is the case with David Bet-sué, who in his work *George Sanders* (2014) took on fictitiously and in first person the suicide in 1972 of the British actor George Sanders and who made his own the text of the suicide note: “Dear World, I am leaving you because I am bored. I feel I have lived long enough. I am leaving you with your worries in this sweet cesspool. Good luck.” Also Alicia Kopf, in her *Diario de conquistas* [Journal of Conquests] (2014), replaces the memory of historical acts with a series of graphic and textual aphorisms aimed at exploring desire and the spaces of everyday conquest. And Marc Larré, in *Sincronías* (2014), understands monuments as prints in which what survives is “the non-past of the past”.

In other cases, the monument, in its desire of losing all hint of rhetoric, is minimalised and turned into an everyday, almost trivial, object, as occurs in the work of Raimond Chaves and Gilda Mantilla, who in *Por una película sin monumentos* [For a Film without Monuments] (2014) put forward the implications of a society without monuments but with a good memory, or in that of Francesc Torres, who in *Propuesta de monumento doblemente trascendente* [Proposal for a Doubly Transcendent Monument] comes even to adulterate history through a pathological monument in a Dadaist format. In other artists — such as Rogelio López Cuenca and his *Proyecto Quilombo/I: Antonio López* [Quilombo Project/I: Antonio López], a homage to places of memory in Barcelona linked to industrial exploitation, Antoni Llena, Muntadas, Daniela Ortiz, Miralda (*Olla de la memoria* [Cooking pot of memory], 2014), Domènec, Alicia Framis, and Sitesize, we would speak of a need not so much to remember (a task that would be assigned to the archive as a place of memories) as to reconsider what role the art of memory plays in the articulation of collective imaginaries.

Also important are the altars, monuments, and kiosks of **Thomas Hirschhorn** (Bern, 1957) and his memorials dedicated to historical figures with whom he identifies and whom he wishes to vindicate: Otto Freundlich (Basel, Berlin, 1998), Spinoza (Amsterdam, 1999), Deleuze (Avignon, 2000), Léger (Zurich, 2001), Bataille (Kassel, 2002) (fig. 41), Foucault (*Foucault 24*, Paris, 2004), Gramsci (New York, Bronx, 2013). Monuments against mausoleums, places to



**Figure 41.** Thomas Hirschhorn, *Bataille*, Kassel (2002).

evaluate different contributions to the reflection about history. Monuments, overall, as popular spaces, for public use, with ephemeral and cheap materials, that look like the monuments created by the anonymous public after certain catastrophes such as the attacks of March 11, 2004 in Madrid and September 11, 2001 in New York, and which invite pedestrians to add their own memento. Some of these monuments are also known as sculptures that require not only production but also the presence of the artist, who is obliged to be present at the place of his work during the time that the project is maintained. Hirschhorn's most recent project for the 2015 Venice Biennale, *Roof Off* (2015), follows a line of artistic reflection that started with the so-called roof sculptures such as *Break-Through* (2013) and *Höhere Gewalt* (2014), intensifying the sense of gravity by seeming to break through the roof of the central pavilion of the Biennale under the slogan: "Quality, no! Energy, yes!"

In his symbolic manipulation of reality, **Fernando Sánchez Castillo** (Madrid, 1970), in a work such as *Arquitectura para un caballo* [Architecture for a Horse] (2002)<sup>56</sup> in which the artist shows the hidden story of a well-known university space, starting from the historical document he uses a recovered concept of deconstruction to reclaim not history — tied to a melancholic fixation or a traumatic dimension — but memory as part of the public and cultural discourse. A new work entitled *Anamnesis* (2003) is composed of replicas of canons taken from the enemy during the war in Africa, a luminous poster of six thousand bulbs with the tirade launched by the general Torrijos in his at-

<sup>56</sup> The work records the choreographic action of a trained horse among the buildings of the Autonomous University of Madrid, a university especially designed for potential police charges against student disturbances.

tempt to overthrow Fernando VII: “Swear on these words, brothers: death before consenting to tyranny,” and an armoured train designed by the Russians that was used by the Spanish Second Republic and which went around the room. As the artist claims:

Today I have the feeling not that history is repeating itself but that it never changes. The way it presents itself to us — or, rather, the way it is represented — is formally and essentially the same. The process through which moral progress is not possible is that which identifies it with the definitions of anamnesis.<sup>57</sup>

In new works, such as the video presented at the 26th São Paulo International Biennial (2004) and entitled *Rich Cat Dies of Heart Attack in Chicago* (*Gato rico muere de infarto en Chicago*) (fig. 42), Sánchez Castillo designs his actions from the leading role of sculptures, busts, and statues of heroes, generals, dictators, or monarchs in the hands of rioting masses or the security forces.<sup>58</sup> For this work, the artist took as his starting point a Brazilian daily newspaper from 1964, a time when there had been a coup that had ended the country’s



**Figure 42.** Fernando Sánchez Castillo, *Rich Cat Dies of Heart Attack in Chicago* (*Gato rico muere de infarto en Chicago*) (2004).

<sup>57</sup> Fernando SÁNCHEZ CASTILLO, *Rich Cat Dies of Heart Attack in Chicago* (exhibition catalogue), 26.<sup>a</sup> Bienal Internacional de São Paulo, Madrid, Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación and Turner, 2004, p. 117.

<sup>58</sup> Katya GARCÍA-ANTÓN, “En las alas de la historia. Fernando Sánchez Castillo”, in Fernando SÁNCHEZ CASTILLO, *Rich Cat Dies of Heart Attack in Chicago*, p. 23.

democratic process, which shows a series of actions in which the bronze head of an authority figure is subjected to punitive acts, from frivolous games to competitive sports or exercises of entertainment: a mixture of violent situations (inspired by Goya's *The Disasters of War*) and absurd ones (from which the work's title is derived). As K. García-Antón indicates:

It is a kind of analysis in the style of Muybridge of the cyclical Dynamic of History, which is to say, of the sequence of actions that characterise an event such as the fall of a ruler, a hero, or a dictator [...]. It is as if Sánchez Castillo were exhuming the hastily buried body of historical trauma and carrying out the required autopsy.<sup>59</sup>

Later, the artist tries to undermine the grandiloquent rhetoric of monumental sculpture through the creation of a series of toys and simulation machines that seek to play with the behaviour of the viewer and which participate in the extensive dismantling of history that characterises contemporary thinking. This can be seen in the installation *Barricadas, juegos y juguetes* [Barricades, Games, and Toys] (1995-2004), which seeks to introduce a "certain process of re-education into our relationship with the impositions of power". These relationships between art and power, between public spaces and collective memory, can be noted in the exhibition *Manu Militari* (2006),<sup>60</sup> which converted one of the monuments to General Franco — a cast-bronze sculpture imitating the real sculpture by Ramiro de Maeztu in Barcelona's Monjuïc castle — into a toy that any spectator, through the mechanism of mobile telephony, could act on so as to make it appear and disappear (it simply required sending an SMS message to 653 23 71 96 with the word "*arriba*" (up) or "*abajo*" (down). In the previously mentioned show,<sup>61</sup> Sánchez Castillo presented a replica of the destroyed Dodge car of Admiral Carrero Blanco, preserved in the Museo del Ejército [Army Museum] in Madrid, hung from the raised roof of the extensive cloister of the Santa Mònica art centre. In this and in his other anti-monuments — such as the models of various commemorative monuments in Madrid (Cybele, the fountain of Apollo) protected by the government of the Republic during the Spanish Civil War — without renouncing either the imperatives of a political artist or those of an aesthetic-formal artist, Sánchez Cas-

59 Katya GARCÍA-ANTÓN, "En las alas de la historia. Fernando Sánchez Castillo", p. 25.

60 *Fernando Sánchez Castillo: Manu Militari* (exhibition catalogue), Barcelona, Centre d'Art Santa Mònica (CASM), November—December 2006.

61 *Fernando Sánchez Castillo: Manu Militari*.

tillo moves between history and reality, reducing the tension between these two universes and showing at the same time their artificial character.

## By way of conclusion

This memorialist impulse brings us towards another consideration: to what extent is the memorialist artist a politically committed artist? On this subject, Nina Möntman, in “Art at the Limits”,<sup>62</sup> formulated the need for an ethic that reflects the mechanisms of contemporary global structures of power with the aim of understanding the political not as denunciation, nor as a form of activism or resistance (as had occurred with the prototype of the political artist of modernity and of deconstructivist post-modernity), nor from micro-politics or post-politics, but from a politics of responsibility and, more specifically, from the ethical.

Thanks to memory, this artist as amanuensis would assume the responsibility of countering the anaesthetic powers of the society of the spectacle, the amnesia of politicians, and even the marketing of memory. And for this, the artist resorts not to the chronicle, nor to the pure document, nor to a mimesis of reality, nor to mechanisms of appropriation or deconstruction, nor coming from any historicist desire, but rather makes use of allegory, of a certain fictional component, of the resort to the aesthetic, of the vindication of the imaginary, of imagined memory, and finally of the ethical, understanding the ethical as a personal responsibility and as a new way of living in the world: “Remember in order to forget. Forget in order to create” (in the words of Paul Ricoeur).

Because in our world, everything would pass through the reclaiming of a new modern ethos that makes its own the defence of an ideal of humanity for everyone and which also implies a recognition of the moral imperative of the modern era — which was pushed aside by the post-modern — able to define a human horizon in which nobody is excluded. In all cases, we would speak of an artist as inhabitant of the global world and interested in the social discourse — not of classes but of territories — not so much the creator of images as the investigator of them, who gathers, creates, questions, tells, and shows iconic or other kinds of information about subjects of a universal character, whether individual or socially local, in a format that Western society (or we) has typified

<sup>62</sup> Nina MÖNTMANN, “Art at the Limits: An Introduction”, in Nina MÖNTMANN (ed.), *Scandalous: A Reader on Art and Ethics*, Berlin and Stockholm, Sternberg Press and The Royal Institute of Art, 2013, pp. 6–25.

and ratified as art. An artist who utilises that information not as the sole object of analysis but as one more instrument (albeit privileged in its status as art) to unmask, discover, denounce, analyse... censored, humiliated, violated, or injured aspects of the world today: democracy, justice, otherhood, migration, rootlessness, and diaspora.

Subjects that have little or nothing to do with forms of life, but with the expendable, evicted life of the world reduced to survival, the *vita nuda* [bare life] that Giorgio Agamben puts forward in his theory of marginalisation,<sup>63</sup> a life relegated to the margins of the social, at the mercy of the political, the judicial, and the biological; a life that alienates — when it does not eliminate — citizens, whom it deprives of their rights as such, whom it abandons in the mire of corrupt legal systems, which turns the human being, according to Agamben, into the unquestionable figure of our time, a time in which we witness the re-emergence of sovereign forms of power and the production of bare life as a constitutive element of the democratic order. We refer to the figure of *homo sacer*, deported from any order and any benefit of society, abandoned to non-existent gods, and whose mere presence stains society. In this sense, according to Agamben, not only are all of us potentially *homo sacer* (*homines sacri*), and de facto bearers of the bare life, but this exceptional figure would inaugurate a future community based not on rights but precisely on their suspension.<sup>64</sup>

That *homo sacer* of bare life, without gods to invoke, is he who, paradoxically, has usurped the presence if not the main role of gods, emperors, nobles, the bourgeoisie, and the revolutionaries that successively and over the centuries have been the protagonists of art.<sup>65</sup> A great number of works by contemporary creators, more than using art as protest, propaganda, or agitprop, propose — from the ethical-political dimension that discovers what is imprisoned in human rights and what is expanded in the excluded, abandoned, and repressed — the muddy world of the bare life and that of the indistinct zones in which power is turned into control or terror. But all this, without renouncing the aesthetic, in a sense that is close both to Agamben's political aesthetics and the aesthetics of Jacques Rancière when he formulates the shape of the sensitive in the field of the new relationship between politics and aesthetics. It is in this aesthetic ter-

63 Giorgio AGAMBEN, *Homo sacer: 1. El poder soberano y la vida nuda*, Valencia, Pre-Textos, 1998.

64 See Anthony DOWNEY, "Zones of Indistinction: Giorgio Agamben's *Bare Life* and the Politics of Aesthetics", *Third Text* (vol. 23, no. 2, March 2009, p. 110).

65 Anthony DOWNEY, "Zones of Indistinction: Giorgio Agamben's *Bare Life* and the Politics of Aesthetics", p. 110

rain — understanding by aesthetic not the theory of art in general rooted in the Hegelian perspective but a specific regime of thinking that articulates ways of doing and of being, and forms of making visible — where the battle can take place today, argues Rancière. A battle that at another time referred to the promises of emancipation and the dreams and disappointments of history and which now goes beyond debates about the autonomy of art and its political subservience, eliminating the control of that which is seen and that which can be seen, and the gap between those who have the competence to see and the quality to speak and those to whom this is not granted.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Jacques RANCIÈRE, *La división de lo sensible: Estética y política*, Salamanca, Centro de Arte de Salamanca, 2002, p. 28.



7

## THE COSMOPOLITAN TURN

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of understanding the underlying mechanisms of the observed phenomena. It is crucial to identify the key factors that influence the outcome, as this will help in developing effective interventions. The second part of the paper focuses on the methodology used in the study, which involves a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. This mixed-methods approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic. The third part of the paper presents the results of the study, which show that the proposed intervention has a significant positive impact on the target population. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings and suggests areas for future research.

The appeal to cosmopolitanism (from the Greek *cosmos*, the universe, and *polites*, citizen) as the ideology according to which all ethnic groups belong to a single community based on a shared morality responds to another of the faces of globalisation, that which seeks at the same time both homogenisation and the utopia of relationality and reciprocal generosity, and which is supposedly against nationalism and regionalism and against localist interests in the name of identity. The word also invokes an ideal of humanity, an essence that includes details of specific circumstances related to place. And, in all cases, the term, both if it suggests cosmopolitan taste or a tolerant attitude towards cultural difference, is not free of contradictions because of the fact that it is supported by complex ideas such as the global, the nation, the postcolonial, hybridity, diaspora, and multiculturalism. As Mark A. Cheetham,<sup>1</sup> argues, we should understand the cosmopolitan starting from a wide concept of the mundane and the sophisticated (associated with the notion of internationalism) to approach a more specific social and political position that values a global community above local priorities.

## Genealogy of the cosmopolitan

With a wide genealogy that would have to go back to Diogenes of Sinope, also known as Diogenes the Cynic (c. 412 BC), the founder of the cynical movement in ancient Greece, and passing through the foundational text of cultural modernity, Immanuel Kant's *Perpetual Peace* (1795),<sup>2</sup> which establishes a *ius*

<sup>1</sup> Mark A. CHEETHAM, "A Renewed Cosmopolitanism: Specifying Artists, Curators, and Art-writers", *Static: The London Consortium* (no. 8, December 2008, p. 8).

<sup>2</sup> Kant refers to cosmopolitanism not as a philanthropic question but as one of law. Hospitality means the right of the stranger not to be treated as an enemy when he arrives at the land of the other. Kant argues that one can refuse to accept him if there is the danger of destruction, but inasmuch as he

*cosmopolitanism* (a cosmopolitan rule with its own laws that proclaims the right of the foreigner not to be treated with hostility when arriving at another person's territory) as the master principle for protecting people from war and to guarantee a universal hospitality, it is not strange that, under the conditions of the historical moment of globalisation, a cosmopolitan identity should emerge here and there which fights for the creation of a movement of global citizens, thanks also to new technologies, space travel and the images of our fragile planet floating in the immensity of space, the theory of global warming, and other ecological aspects of our collective existence.

The most contemporary visions of the cosmopolitan continue to be in part influenced by Kant's invitation to free circulation, although limited by the rights of sovereignty, of people across borders, qualities that are a legacy of the values of the Enlightenment that sought to transform the way of perceiving truth and beauty. But it is clear that, in the contemporary context, the rise of cosmopolitan thought is directly linked to the loss of faith in the modern conception of secular national identity and the decline of the concept of the nation-state united to that of internationalism.

In this line, two texts of the philosopher Jacques Derrida reclaim Kantian cosmopolitanism and its theory of hospitality as a way of confronting the growing nationalism and civil conflicts in many cultures. Pure hospitality is not only a principle or a concept, it is also a law inscribed in culture. And although this law is limited by the local legal system and specific types of conditions, it can nonetheless open itself to a new concept of the city, to another international law, and to a future democracy. *Cosmopolites de tous les pays, encore un effort*<sup>3</sup> is the text of a lecture written by Derrida for the International Parliament of Writers and read on 21 March 1996 in Strasbourg with the aim of reflecting on hospitality and cosmopolitanism through the creation of city-refuges as a response to the exclusion of the other and the rise in racism.

Apart from the field of philosophy and that of ethics, the concept of cosmopolitanism took on an important role in the context of postcolonial discourses and of a transnational anthropology, and in this regard the contribu-

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pacifically occupies his place, he should not be treated with hostility. It is not the right to be a permanent visitor that one asks for. What is needed is more a special agreement to give the stranger the right to become an inhabitant for a certain period of time. It is only the right to a temporary permanence, a right to enjoy what all people have. Originally no one has more rights than another to occupy a particular part of the Earth. See James BOHMAN and Matthias LUTZ-BACHMANN (eds.), *Perpetual Peace: Essays on Kant's Cosmopolitan Ideal*, Cambridge (Mass.), The MIT Press, 1997.

3 Translated into English as *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, London and New York, Routledge, 2001.

tions of James Clifford, Homi Bhabha, and Kwame A. Appiah stand out. James Clifford, in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (1997), understands the role of travel as the cosmopolitan *modus operandi* as a translation term. And in this sense, Clifford suggests speaking of discrepant cosmopolitanism which would avoid both the excessive localism of cultural relativism and the global vision of a capitalist or technocratic monoculture. In this travelling culture of which Clifford speaks, cosmopolitan and travelling people would exist together with locals and natives. Clifford's aim is not simply to invert the strategies of cultural localisation or the invention of the native and he insists:

This is not nomadology. Rather, what is at stake is a comparative cultural studies approach to specific histories, tactics, everyday practices of dwelling and travelling: travelling-in-dwelling, dwelling-in-travelling.<sup>4</sup>

From another point of view, in his essay "The Vernacular Cosmopolitan",<sup>5</sup> Homi Bhabha refers to cosmopolitanism in the context of British minorities and migrants. Maintaining the language, food, festivals, and religious customs of their ancestors is a way of claiming their own survival almost as a civic virtue. Bhabha holds that the local and specific histories of minorities, often repressed and threatened, are written between the lines of dominant cultural practices. And this is done through the concept of cultural translation, proposed as a renegotiation of traditions. Bhabha writes that aesthetic and cultural values come from these borders between languages, territories, and communities and that, strictly speaking, they do not belong to a single culture. They are rather about values produced in practices that are the fruit of cross-linking and acquire meaning as cultures in understanding that they are intimately related to each other. Bhabha says that his own work as a literary critic has implied a similar process of finding his own voice between the lines of other people's texts, in the form of a translation analogous to this process.<sup>6</sup> The position of the cultural translator can be occupied, in his or her own particular field of

4 James CLIFFORD, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 1997.

5 Homi K. BHABHA, "The Vernacular Cosmopolitan", in Ferdinand DENNIS and Naseem KHAN, *Voices of the Crossing: The Impact of Britain on Writers from Asia, the Caribbean and Africa*, London, Serpent's Tail, 2000, pp. 133-142. See also Homi K. BHABHA, *Nuevas minorías, nuevos derechos: Notas sobre los cosmopolitismos vernáculos*, Buenos Aires, Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2013.

6 Homi K. BHABHA, "The Vernacular Cosmopolitan", pp. 139-140.

reference, only by the figure of a privileged author or a text. And the figure of the translator is none other than that of the vernacular cosmopolitan.<sup>7</sup>

In his most recent reflection about cosmopolitanism, Homi Bhabha<sup>8</sup> replaces the adjective vernacular with insurgent and, starting from Kant's concept of cosmopolitanism, links cosmopolitan norms to the global ethic. For Bhabha, cosmopolitanism is not what you are but rather what you do: a political, aesthetic, and ethical practice. And always as a practice beyond racism and elitism and even beyond identity. Human rights, questions of hospitality, sovereignty, security or community, peripheral subjects, the exploited, or refugees are the new citizens of the new global polis which, beyond the figure of the cosmopolitan of modernity — the modern equivalent of Homer's Ulysses, Swift's Gulliver, or the *flâneur* of Baudelaire or Benjamin — does not raise questions of philanthropy so much as those of human rights. What counts, according to Bhabha, are no longer the ontological questions derived from cosmopolitanism (as occurred in Kant) but their performative dimension: how the new political subjects, and above all vernacular subjects, place an attitude of insurgency ahead of a homogenous era of security. Hence insurgent cosmopolitanism necessarily implies restructuring the scope and power of the concept of citizenship and its connections with power and legitimacy.

As Kwame Anthony Appiah,<sup>9</sup> one of the most prominent thinkers of the global cosmopolitan, argues, the borders between nations, states, cultures, and societies are morally irrelevant. And it is then when it becomes possible to speak of a cosmopolitan community in which individuals of different places establish relationships of mutual respect in spite of their different beliefs (religious, political, etc.). Appiah, in referring to the new cosmopolitanism, asks how we can connect our skill or capacity to respond (response-ability) to our responsibility within the global community. And this after recognising the importance of the strategic principle of a conversation that suggests opening our self to others more from an imaginative commitment than from a mere assimilation. As Appiah argues:

Conversations across boundaries of identity — whether national, religious, or something else — begin with the sort of imaginative engagement you get when

7 Homi K. BHABHA, "The Vernacular Cosmopolitan", p. 140.

8 Lecture given by Homi K. Bhabha during the congress *Former West. Documents, Constellations, Prospects*, Berlin, 18-24 March 2013.

9 Kwame Anthony APPIAH, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, New York, W. W. Norton, 2006, p. 85.

you read a novel or watch a movie or attend to a work of art that speaks from some place other than your own.<sup>10</sup>

In the essay “Rooted Cosmopolitanism”<sup>11</sup> Appiah quotes a father’s final message to his son in which he urged him to remember that he is a citizen of the world. Appiah not only uses a historical basis to demonstrate the longevity of the term in question but also understands cosmopolitanism as construction of the late twentieth century, precipitated in giant steps by communication over the internet, and he presents it as a description of global migrations and the interactions that have been taking place for centuries. And on this point Appiah ties all analysis of cosmopolitanism to a question of race, putting all the emphasis on the ethical obligations that are inherent to the construction of a personal view of oneself as an individual and social human being.<sup>12</sup>

## Cosmopolitanism and global contemporary art

From the perspective of cosmopolitanism, many artistic practices of the last decade represent a true seismograph in which some of these paradoxes derived from the global intertwine and not only reflect the various transnational and translocal exchanges that are the product of the global economy but can also even change the way in which we imagine, understand, and commit ourselves to the world and to others. And this from a fusion between what Marsha Meskimmon, in the text *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*,<sup>13</sup> calls cosmopolitan imagination, locational identity, and the ethics of commitment, understood as the new version of the politics of responsibility in the age of globalisation. How can we both literally and metaphorically be cosmopolitans from our place of origin, avoiding simplistic myths of origin and authenticity? How to analyse the different relationships between the global and the local without this becoming a mere exercise of the domination of one (the global) over the other (the local)? Can questions derived from cultural hy-

<sup>10</sup> Kwame Anthony APPIAH, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, p. 85.

<sup>11</sup> Kwame Anthony APPIAH, “Rooted Cosmopolitanism”, in *The Ethics of Identity*, Princeton (New Jersey), Princeton University Press, 2005, p. 104.

<sup>12</sup> Kwame Anthony APPIAH, “Rooted Cosmopolitanism”, p. 107.

<sup>13</sup> Marsha MESKIMMON, *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, London and New York, Routledge, 2011, p. 5.

bridisation and diaspora help us to overhaul the traditional conventions about cultural identity and interactions between cultures?

Fully reclaiming the debates about a concept of place that even overcomes the anthropological concept of place as a register of cultures and identities, what is imperative is a process of deconstructing the space of the nation as a natural category and as a homogenous place with its closed frontiers and its traditional sense of belonging. A process that situates us in a territory marked by nomadology in which cosmopolitanism is perceived as a metaphor for mobility, migration, and coexistence within difference, in opposition to xenophobia and limited notions of sovereignty. It is in this sense that what counts are notions of the anti-hegemonic and anti-homogenising potential of cosmopolitanism, in opposition to the power associated with Western tendencies of an imperialist hue. And, finally, the cosmopolitanism to which we allude is also perceived as a search for peace through the development of a profound sense of ethics and morality towards other human beings everywhere.

## The exhibition environment

Within the exhibition environment there is an increasing abundance of exhibitions that, as with the concept of cosmopolitanism, evoke mixed feelings, giving greater visibility to a complex variety of intercultural experiences and places of appropriation and exchange. In 2007, the Espai d'Art Contemporani de Castelló (EACC) presented an exhibition project, *Nuestra hospitalidad*,<sup>14</sup> which investigated the dynamics of the city of Castelló and the dialogues between its inhabitants and its visitors (visitors who could be in the position of tourists or of passers-by) through the activation of the term hospitality, a word that dates back to ancient Greece but with clear allusions here also to the Buster Keaton film *Our Hospitality*, a silent comedy from 1923 which tells the story of Willie McKay, immersed in the battle between the Canfield and McKay clans. And this within the framework of a city, Castelló, which has become more heterogeneous (colourful) through the impact of migration and which has generated multiple figures both metaphorical and real of these encounters between natives and foreigners, between the Canfields and the McKays. Hence the instructions of the curator, Rodrigo Alonso, to the five invited artists, from South Africa (Gregg Smith), Colombia (Milena Bonilla), Cuba (Oriol Guillén),

<sup>14</sup> Rodrigo ALONSO (ed.), *Nuestra hospitalidad* (exhibition catalogue), Castelló, Espai d'Art Contemporani de Castelló (EACC), 22 June–16 September 2007.

Romania (Liliana Basarab), and Barcelona (Claudio Zulián). Instructions through which the artists were invited to carry out a kind of fieldwork following almost literally the working route of any good postcolonial ethnographer: journey, participatory observation, dialogue, mapping, interaction, and a metaphorical use of documentation.

This explains the need for each artist not to resort to history, nor to archives, nor to specialist opinions, but rather to work with direct observations and personal feelings. These dialogic spaces around the duality of terms such as host and newcomer were clearly shown in Gregg Smith's video, which tells of the experience of the local who returns home (after a long period away) and discovers a completely new city, and in that of Claudio Zulián, who set the camera within Romanian families whose knowledge of the city of Castelló comes to them through the oral documents of their family members. Contact with locals from their nucleus of origin (their homes) was manifested in the work of Oriol Guillén through his installation of doors, lent for the period of the exhibition by their owners, which when passed through bring us, through video monitors, to the faces of their owners, their ways of living, surrounded by their belongings, and, finally, to their new roots.

Later, *The Unexpected Guest. Art, Writing and Thinking on Hospitality* was the title of the Liverpool Biennial of 2012 which, through artists including Doug Aiken, John Akomfrah, Dora García, Trevor Paglen, Superflex, and Akram Zaatari, centred its attention on the difficulty of being a host, of being a guest, and potentially of becoming someone who is not welcome. In the Liverpool project, hospitality appeared in many forms: as a welcoming of foreigners, as an attitude and code of conduct, and as a metaphor that regulates the stability of notions such as body, territory, politics, and the movement of data.

As Lorenzo Fusi<sup>15</sup> holds, hospitality — derived from its Latin etymology *hospes*, which means both host and guest, and *hostis*, which means foreigner but also enemy — is an ambiguous term. And it even shares the same etymological root as hospital and hospice. The network of associations and intersections would create a connecting thread that links a variety of institutions, agencies, and disciplines under the same roof. Fusi suggests resorting to other systems such as biology, physics, and medicine to reinterpret the old concept of hospitality beyond the host/guest dichotomy and, specifically, to refer to notions of biopolitics and biopower, as formulated by Foucault and articulat-

15 Lorenzo FUSI, "Disappearing Human Beings, No Problems", in Sally TALLANT and Paul DOMELA (eds.), *The Unexpected Guest: Art, Writing and Thinking on Hospitality*, London, Art Books, 2012, pp. 11-12.

ed by Agamben in his theory of the bare life and the exception in relation to the construction of sovereignty and the legal-political order. In this sense, the immigrant, the guest, and the refugee would represent this state of exception or the component of the bare life.<sup>16</sup>

From the title of a 1953 work by Duchamp, *A Guest + A Host = A Ghost*, a good number of the works presented in the Biennial did not seek the positive side of hospitality but rather to reflect a subtle violence that leads us to questions such as: What are the psychological dynamics that prompt us to welcome the stranger/foreigner within our intimate space and what are the implications of this way of proceeding? Within this context, Sylvie Blocher's project, *The Series: Speeches* (2012), used a series of videos of singers whose songs were substituted by voices with various readings about the paradoxes of hospitality from Jacques Rancière, Barack Obama, Karl Marx, Angela Davis, Édouard Glissant, and Michel Foucault. The artists rewrite a new text about how hospitality, more than welcoming everyone, explores the ways through which bodies, gestures, and works remain united to the concept of community. New works by Sun Xun, a large-scale installation of drawings and animation in which he explores the cultural traditions of hospitality in his native China (*Ancient Film*, 2012), as well as Doug Aiken's video installation (*The Source*, 2012), an approach by the artist to public art through conversations with other artists (the late Mike Kelley), film actresses (Tilda Swinton), and musicians such as Jack White, seem to reaffirm the end of the era of hospitality and the need to define a new relational structure.

This was also reflected in the work of Suzanne Lacy, *Storying Rape* (2012), a series of performances in which the artist tried to define hospitality as a relational structure based on cohabitation, in which everyone has the right to be in the same space at the same time, a structure in which inalienable human rights are not questioned or granted as a gift by someone who has more privileges or authority than others. The right to be cannot be confused with an act of generosity, Fusi concluded.<sup>17</sup> The Biennial also referred to — as can be seen in the works of the group Superflex, founded in 1993 by Jakob Fenger, Rasmus Nielsen, and Bjornstjerne Christiansen (*Foreigners, Please Don't Leave Us Alone with the Danes!*, 2014), and of Mona Hatoum (*Doormat II*, 2000) — inhospitality and how, within “fortress Europe” and in light of increasing restrictions on immigration, an unfamiliar fear and a xenophobic psychosis were generat-

16 Giorgio AGAMBEN, *Homo sacer: 1. El poder soberano y la vida nuda*.

17 Lorenzo FUSI, “Disappearing Human Beings, No Problems”, p. 15.

ed among people of the old continent towards practices and international agreements such as the Schengen Treaty.

A new exhibition — or, to be more specific, a platform of nine exhibitions, workshops, and events — *Host & Guest*, celebrated in the Museum of Tel Aviv in 2013, started out from the philosophical, political, literary, architectural, and artistic reflections derived from Kant's essay *Project for Perpetual Peace* (*Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf*, 1795) and Derrida's writings about hospitality linked to the seminars he gave in Paris in 1996.<sup>18</sup> Different artists such as Dora García, Raqs Media Collective, Kimsooja, and David Tatarkover worked on the possible meanings of the words hospice, hostile, host, hostage, guest, ghost, and hospitality, terms which in English derive from a similar origin and describe a network of obligations and tensions that since long ago had characterised the relations between host and guest. In what conditions does the guest arrive? As an adventurer or as a refugee? As a vagabond or as a victim? To conquer or to collapse? And what happens when the visitor arrives at our door and we reply to him with new questions related to the colonisation of language, to the symbiotic and sometimes parasitic ties between cultural institutions and their workers and consumers, to the problematic of the political-geographical border zones and other concepts referring to the unknown, to exile, or to the host as hostage?

## Artistic practices

For many artists, such as Dyanita Singht, Zarina Bhimji, Yinka Shonibare, Yin Xiuzhen, and Vivan Sundaram what is important is how to negotiate a sense of belonging to a place from a sort of intersubjectivity, an interbody practice, and — more specifically — a generous and emotional form of subjectivity in conversation with the others in and through difference. This, for example, was the point of the exhibition in the German Pavilion of the Venice Biennale of 2013, which acted as the guest of the French Pavilion, and was accommodated within its traditional spaces, sharing a common sense of living and thinking as cosmopolitans, but without refusing to reveal collisions between transnational developments, traditions or vernacular roots, and personal destinations. One of the four artists present in the German Pavilion (the other three were Romuald Karmakar, Ai Wiewei, and Santu Mofokeng), the Indian artist

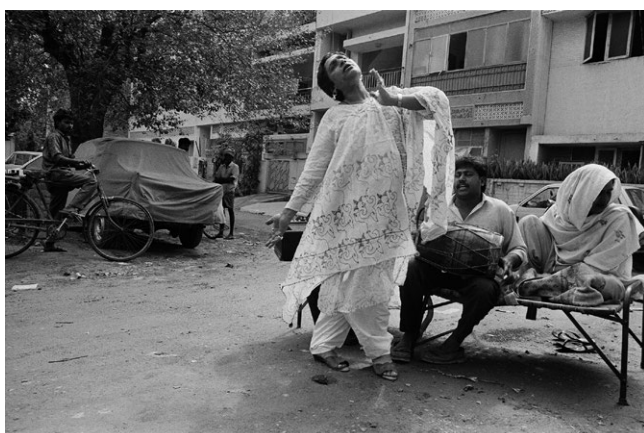
<sup>18</sup> *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2000.



**Figure 43.** Dayanita Singh, *File Room* (2011).

**Dayanita Singh** (New Delhi, 1961), in her fascination for collections of documents, archive repositories, and the mixture of physical and spectral presences in the libraries of the colonial period, merged innumerable images coming from her Indian past (including classical traditions of society and family) with her perceptions of the present. Specifically, the series *File Room* (2011) (fig. 43) is an elegy that confronts chaos, mortality, and disorder in the labyrinths of bureaucratic archives. It is about an archive of arch-

chives which functions as a monument to knowledge and to the art of memory, displayed in a conceptual manner that proposes to us a language of testimony that, beyond the specific place, expands a series of associative and meditative deviations in the reception of knowledge. Other works such as *Mona and Myself* (2013) (fig. 44) (Mona is the heart and the axis of Singh's nomadic life) are an archive in which the new and the old, past and present, such as the biography of Mona Ahmed (member of a secret community, with its rituals and ceremonies, which does not allow access to strangers) and Dayanita's autobiography find themselves in a mutual interconnection taking the form of interwoven lives.



**Figure 44.** Dayanita Singh, *Mona and Myself* (2013).

Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that Dayanita Singh resists any kind of classification: on the one hand, she rejects being presented both in historical narratives and in curatorial projects as an artistic representative of a nation-state, of a society, or of a gender. Singh's artistic career has been distinguished by a constant desire to elude the tyranny of the various contexts in which she finds herself on the basis of questions of birth, discipline, professional domain, and the economy of the cultural production in which she has operated. And in clear harmony with the concept of cosmopolitanism, she has improvised a series of transition strategies to liberate her practice from preconceived formats and genres.<sup>19</sup>

Another example of how the local and the vernacular can have a cosmopolitan dimension is the work of the artist **Zarina Bhimji** (Uganda, 1963), born to a family of Indian immigrants and resident in London since 1974, two years after General Idi Amin expelled the Asians from Uganda. In her celebrated anthological exhibition held at the Whitechapel in London in 2011,<sup>20</sup> Zarina Bhimji, through a selection of her photographic and film work, showed a renewed interest in the legacy of colonial histories, the testimonies of those sections of official histories and the traumas of displacement and exile within a clear commitment to cosmopolitanism. In London she showed once again the work with which she had participated in the 2002 Documenta in Kassel, the video *Out of Blue* (2002) which, like the new video work *Yellow Patch* (2011), explored topics of migration and colonialism through the representation of the rural spaces and architectural environments of Uganda and India respectively. But when the artist affirms that her work does not deal with real events but with the echo that they create — the marks, the gestures and the sounds — it makes us think that, beyond the specifics of the places and the personal biography, it is necessary to analyse her work from a global or cosmopolitan universality. The presence of stories and places deeply rooted in her native Uganda, as in the case of *Out of Blue*, serve the artist as a device to show, in the midst of references to British colonial history and hostility towards Asian immigrants from Uganda, how the local can cross the borders of the cultural and the geographically specific, existing in universal contexts relative to the displacement,

19 Ranjit HOSKOTE, "Eluding the tyranny of context: Dayanita Singh's strategies of transition", in Susanne GAENSHEIMER (ed.), *Ai Weiwei, Romuald Karmakar, Santu Mofokeng, Dayanita Singh: German Pavilion. 55th International Art Exhibition. La Biennale di Venezia* (exhibition catalogue), Berlin, Gestalten, 2013, pp. 172-173.

20 See Alice CORREIA, "Zarina Bhimji: *Light, Time and Dislocation*", *Third Text* (vol. 26, no. 3, May 2012, pp. 359-374).

the trauma, and the pain associated with global migration. In the film, the journeys across the landscape of the Uganda of her childhood, its architecture, its airport, its military barracks, its police cells, and the prisons of Amin's regime of terror do not succeed in decentring any possibility of narration. But, through the metaphor of fire, violence, and destruction, the landscape is presented with the possibility of a new life.

The non-narrative structure of *Out of Blue* is repeated in *Yellow Patch*, filmed in four locations in India and referring to a history of Indian migration and the legacy of the British Empire. Past and present are unified in the magnificent image of a palace in Kutch, a remote place in Gujarat, near the Pakistani border, and in a sequence filmed in the port of Mandiv which shows a partially built ship that the artist describes as the "architecture of the sea". In general, this history of colonial domination and of the subsequent migration is not expressed through either people or bodies, but through their footprints: voices as fragmentary evidence of the occupation and the use of textures, sounds, and light. It is clear that Bhumi presents human histories in an oblique way by activating memories and feelings of home. And, as T.J. Demos<sup>21</sup> indicates, in the catalogue text, Bhumi's works, created in the convergence of autobiography, history, and collective memory, can be understood as late emotional responses of how the past is recorded and transmitted within the present, of how stories are told, and how they impact our current understanding of the world.

From another perspective, as Nikos Papastergiadis<sup>22</sup> points out, it is relevant to consider the possibility of obtaining a new point of view about cosmopolitanism from small gestures in specific places. From the assumption that cosmopolitanism is driven not only by the large transformations of globalisation but that it also manifests in a subtle way during times of transition, the Australian theoretician proposes a new way to understand it which includes micro-connections that are produced in specific places (both from transnational networks and from local streets). One can then find a small *communality* which allows the discovery of a nexus of union between certain people and others within a complex process of dispersion and integration (beyond consid-

21 T. J. DEMOS, "Zarina Bhumi: Cinema of Affect", in *Zarina Bhumi* (exhibition catalogue), London, Whitechapel Gallery, 2011, p. 24. See also Alice CORREIA, "Local-Global Positions in Zarina Bhumi's *Out of Blue*", in Gregory MINISALE and Celina JEFFERY (eds.), *Global and Local Art Histories*, Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars, 2007, pp. 27-42.

22 NIKOS PASTERGIADIS, "Glimpses of Cosmopolitanism in the Hospitality of Art", *European Journal of Social Theory* (vol. 10, no. 1, 2007, pp. 144-145).

ering cosmopolitanism an elusive idea that at some time addressed good government and ethical conduct).

Can the idea of cosmopolitanism serve as a complement or counterpoint to established notions of community? asks Nikos Papastergiadis, who then refers to a series of contemporary artistic practices. Among these we could highlight that of the group Stalker, which in 2002 created the research network Observatorio Nómada (ON), made up of architects, artists, activists, and researchers whose work uses a special methodology for urban research using participatory tools to construct an imaginary collective for each place, and is based on the idea of community and of reformulating it through the ethic of hospitality, according to which the host and the guest interrelate.

And in this sense, a common trait in collaborative practice based on small gestures beyond any utopian intention would be the massive attraction of people with like-minded ideas. In the Stalker manifesto there is a similar suggestion that creative energy is generated through the oscillation between dispersion and reunion, applying this implication to situations in which the limits of one's own self-knowledge and the complexity of the territory are confronted, as can be seen in the video (understood as an archive instrument and a performative device) that forms part of a transnational project called *Via Egnatia*, a sort of journey along the old road that united Rome with Constantinople, a road that continues today to be a transit zone for ancient gypsies and displaced people in the Balkans, and in which the collective accumulates bits of information, coming from historical texts and interviews with people, from searches in the remains of abandoned spaces. And in this process, the collective traces contemporary conditions of conviviality, exploring the changing forms that this adopts in different contexts, developing a working methodology that displaces the emphasis of artistic practice from what Nikos Papastergiadis, using the words of Manray Hsu, calls cultural representations of difference to the mediation between growing differences that co-exist around us.<sup>23</sup>

At first sight, the works of these artists seem to have little in common with each other. But they point to different geographical experiences of home, rejecting what we could call the tyranny of context and simplistic myths of origin and the construction of an authentic identity. And all examples are implicated in the practices of living in a global world, constructing a particular form of being at home marked by movement, change, and multiplicity. And it is in

23 Nikos Papastergiadis quotes Manray Hsu, "Networked Cosmopolitanism", in Nick TSOUTAS (ed.), *Knowledge + Dialogue + Exchange*, Sydney, Artspace, 2005, p. 76. See NIKOS PASTERGIADIS, "Glimpses of Cosmopolitanism in the Hospitality of Art", p. 150.

this sense that we think that they participate in a critical dialogue between ethical responsibility, locational identity, and that which — following Bhabha — we have called vernacular cosmopolitanism.

From a cosmopolitan perspective, more than directly relating identity to place or to the act of sharing a secure home, the works included in this turn seek to restructure the concept of the citizen and their ties with power and legitimisation. Thus, we could speak of a cosmopolitanism that evokes mixed feelings, that names and makes more visible a wide spectrum of intercultural experiences, places of appropriation, and of interchange. A cosmopolitanism that recognises places of interplanetary crossing: complex and unfinished routes between the local and the global, including a sense of cultural diversity beyond rigid geographical borders. And incorporating the concept of home through processes of belonging and ethics, both of ideas of dwelling and of hospitality.

All of which would place us facing a radical change which, more than asking what is it that works of art show us about the world, asks us to what degree we can help ourselves to participate and potentially change the parameters through which we negotiate with it. And always starting from the supposition that spaces and subjects are mutually constituted in a dynamic exchange and that subjects are disembodied, transindividual, and generous — that is to say, open to encounters with many different others:

Reconceiving subjectivity beyond the isolating fortress of monolithic individualism has important ramifications for thinking differently about the subjects interpellated through the impact of globalisation.<sup>24</sup>

According to M. Meskimon, contemporary art circulates across the length and breadth of the same paths as global capital, and its signs cross the routes traversed at the same time by powerful metropolitan elites and migrants left to their economic fate. And it is not surprising to think that the different processes of cohabitation and living that individuals generate through these economies must be articulated by the route of work. And the now habitual processes of representation — such as one's own autobiographical translation, one's common place, or one's experiences of belonging to a transnational movement — are not always sufficient.

Meskimon's thesis is that any aesthetic intervention in the processes of interweaving concepts of place and individual provide new bases to reconsid-

<sup>24</sup> Marsha MESKIMMON, *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, p. 6.

er questions of knowledge, agency, and political commitment in a globalised world. What is important is how to negotiate the sense of belonging to a place from the critical reclaiming of a subjectivity understood as an intersubjectivity, an interbody practice, embedded within multiple levels of interchange, and, more specifically, a generous and emotional form of subjectivity in conversation with others in and through difference. Hence resorting to the concept of cosmopolitanism, which we understand as a specific and relational matter, directed at a cultural diversity beyond narrow and defined geopolitical borders. A cosmopolitanism tied to the concept of home through processes of belonging (feeling at home) and of ethics, through ideas both of dwelling and of hospitality.<sup>25</sup>

A cosmopolitanism that asks us how can we connect with each other more through dialogue than monologue and what is aesthetic is the most profound sense of the word: as a politics that operates in the interface between materiality and imagination, between the individual and the social, the local and the global. And, as Meskimmon argues, the first step to convert ourselves into cosmopolitans is to imagine ourselves at home and in the world at the same time, where our homes are not fixed objects but processes of material and conceptual commitment<sup>26</sup> with other people and different places.<sup>27</sup>

But perhaps the most interesting thing is to warn that Meskimmon does not so much undertake a revisionist analysis of the concept of cosmopolitanism but rather — starting out from Kwame Anthony Appiah and his idea of proposing the cosmopolitan in its intrinsic connections with conversation, imagination, and art at the level of the ethical — seeks to ask questions about the potential of contemporary art to generate a critical and specific cosmopolitan imagination, an aesthetic of opening that recognises its place within the world and which at the same time is responsible for it.

And in the same line that Rob Wilson points to in “A New Cosmopolitanism is in the Air: Some Dialectical Twists and Turns,”<sup>28</sup> Meskimmon understands the cosmopolitan imagination as the key element for generating a global sense of ethical and political responsibility in the individual: “Cosmopolitan

25 Ulf HEDETOFT and Mette HJORT (eds.), *The Postnational Self: Belonging and Identity*, Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 2002. Quoted by Marsha MESKIMMON, *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, pp. 6-7.

26 Kwame Anthony APPIAH, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, p. 85.

27 Marsha MESKIMMON, *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, p. 8.

28 Rob WILSON, “A New Cosmopolitanism is in the Air: Some Dialectical Twists and Turns”, in Pheng CHEAH and Bruce ROBBINS (eds.), *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998, pp. 351-361 and p. 355.

imagination is an emergent concept, it does not describe law or public policy and it cannot assure compliance in that sense. However, it is also a future-oriented and generative concept, able to locate and affect us profoundly by transforming our relationship with/in the world. Cosmopolitan imagination generates conversations in a field of flesh, fully sensory, embodied processes of interrogation, critique and dialogue, that can enable us to think of our homes and ourselves as open to change and alterity. Understanding ourselves as wholly embedded within the world, we can imagine people and things beyond our immediate experience and develop our ability to respond to very different spaces, meanings and others.”<sup>29</sup>

And contemporary art in this sense is one of the most significant ways in which the cosmopolitan imagination can emerge and be articulated. And like the concept of cosmopolitan imagination, art is not the synonym of legislative power, it cannot oblige us to act, its register is emotional and not prescriptive. It would be better for us to speak of art in relation to its ability to transmit the intimate relationship between the material and the conceptual, invoking different geographical experiences of home, rejecting simplistic myths of origin and their corollary of constructions of authentic identity, and placing ourselves at the meeting point between the real and the imaginary, taking part in a critical dialogue between ethical responsibility, locational identity, and cosmopolitan imagination which tries to answer the following question: What role does art perform when designing and reconfiguring the political, ethical, and social landscape of our times?

29 Marsha MESKIMMON, *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, p. 8. See also David HARVEY, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2009.

When we talk about the geographical, ecological, ethnographic, historical, documentary, and cosmopolitan “turns” in relation to the work of practitioners of contemporary art, what exactly do we mean? Are we talking about a “reading strategy”? About an interpretive model, as would be derived from the linguistic turn of the 1970s, or rather about a stratigraphic structure that could be read across multiple cultural practices? Do we wish to read one system by means of another system, in a way that one nurtures the other so that it can open us up to other forms of being? Or is it rather about a generative movement in which a new horizon emerges in the process, leaving behind the practice that was its point of departure?

The recurrence of “turn” in place of “style”, “-ism”, or “tendency” would ultimately respond to a clear urgency of the contemporary global world: a movement characterised by aesthetic pluralism, by the simultaneousness of various *modi operandi*, and by a great multiplicity of languages that constantly change their state while having many features in common. And “turn” would also allow within the space of the contemporary — of here and now —, a great diversity of stories from all around the world that should be confronted simultaneously in an intellectual outlook that is continuous and disjunctive, essential to understanding the present as a whole.



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