

# CIMAM 2005 Annual Conference

“Museums: Intersections in a Global Scene”

A two-day conference examining the role of the art museum and the geopolitics of knowledge, with a focus on the Latin-American context

21- 22 November, 2005 – Pinacoteca do Estado, Sao Paulo, Brazil

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## Welcoming remarks and introduction

*Marcelo Mattos Araújo – Director, Pinacoteca do Estado*

First of all, I would like to thank CIMAM and its management board for the decision to organise its annual meeting in the Pinacoteca of the State of São Paulo. Our museum is commemorating its first centenary this year. We report to the Secretary of State for Culture of the Government of the State of São Paulo and constitute the oldest art museum in the city. We now have more than six thousand works in our collection, essentially of Brazilian art from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and two exhibition spaces.

We currently have several exhibitions that I hope you will have the opportunity to visit.

In this building, the Pinacoteca Luz, we have an exhibition of Argentinian artist Xul Solar, which is a joint venture with the Museum of Latin-American Art of Buenos Aires – MALBA; a retrospective of the Brazilian artist of Italian origin Anna Maria Maiolino, a presentation of the Brasiliana collection, constituted by works of travelling artists who spent time in Brazil in the nineteenth centuries, pertaining to the Fundação Estudar, and on the second floor, an overview of our collection, with over 1,000 works on display. On the same floor as this conference, we have two photography exhibitions: one by Cuban photographer Jorge Luis Alvares Pupo, and the other by Brazilian photographer Gisela Martins, that recovers much of the influence and importance of African culture in Brazil.

In our second building, called Estação Pinacoteca, we are currently displaying the exhibition *Portugal Novo*, organised by the Arts Institute of the Ministry of Culture of Portugal, concerning Portuguese contemporary art, as well as two exhibitions of engravings by leading figures in Brazilian graphic art: Marcio Perigo and Claudio Mubarac. In the second floor, you can visit a fantastic panorama of Brazilian modern art, the Nemirovsky Collection, a private collection which is on permanent loan to our Museum.

The Pinacoteca of São Paulo is very proud of all the effort and dedication that has gone into the construction of this museum over the past one hundred years and above all our sense of responsibility to continue with this task. We are deeply satisfied to be able to host all participants during these two days, in order to exchange our experiences and discussions, within this area which we view as being of fundamental importance for the continuation and furthering of museological institutions and the revision of the role that they play in our society.

Thank you very much.

## **Welcoming remarks and introduction II**

*Alfred Pacquement – President, CIMAM*

It is a great privilege for me to open this Annual Congress of CIMAM. For more or less thirty years, CIMAM has, within ICOM, continued as a forum for modern art museums: a forum of discussion, of encounters, for colleagues coming from all over the world.

CIMAM was created by a group of such colleagues who were motivated by this necessity. I have this morning received the very sad news that Edy de Wilde, one of those founding members, died yesterday. I want to honour his memory and propose we dedicate this conference to him.

One of the first discussions of the new board was to decide where the annual conference would take place. We immediately thought of Latin America because of the very interesting developments in artistic creation in this part of the world and also of its many new museums. The last time CIMAM met here was nearly a quarter of a century ago in Argentina, but never before in Brazil. With its visual artists, architects, filmmakers, musicians, etc., we thought Brazil would be a great place for the congress but we had to find, of course, colleagues here with which to work on this project. Ivo Mesquita responded very positively to our initial contact and also Marcelo Mattos Araujo, Director of the Pinacoteca do Estado. I want to extend our thanks to both of them for supporting the project and, in a very short period of time, realising this congress so beautifully.

With yesterday's visits, the start of the congress has been extremely active. We saw two museums, one art gallery, one private collection, one piece of architecture and one centre of research for young artists: in short, a perfect concentration of what would usually have taken much longer.

To make this congress a success, we of course wanted it to be extremely international. We are very grateful to those who supported this project financially, especially so that colleagues from Latin America and Central Europe could be with us. I want to thank very deeply the Cisneros Foundation as well as the Getty Foundation whose support helped ensure that colleagues from all continents are represented. Also I should thank the Patrons of CIMAM, some of whom are with us today. Let me also thank the speakers and all the hosts of the events, most especially the Pinacoteca. Our thanks also go to Pilar Cortada, our co-ordinator, without whom we would not be here today.

I want to welcome Alissandra Cummins: it is I think the first time we have a President of ICOM at one of our congresses.

We live a complex period where society has developed museums with a very strong political and social role. As ever we are facing questions over who is making the decisions, how are museums supported, how to keep our independence, how we react to the dictatorship of the media, of the numbers of visitors, the question of the market, etc. These meetings offer us the opportunity to exchange points of view between professionals; also to listen to and discuss with theoreticians.

I therefore wish you all a very interesting and stimulating conference.

### **Welcoming remarks and introduction III**

*Alissandra Cummins – President, ICOM*

I am delighted to be here in Brazil for the Annual Meeting of CIMAM, one of ICOM's most innovative, and active International Committees. To the best of my understanding, this is the first time a President of ICOM is present at a CIMAM annual conference. Whether or not this is so, I am both honoured and privileged to be with you on this occasion, and particularly as we are meeting in my region today.

John Zvereff, the Secretary-General of ICOM, whose warm greetings I convey to you, urged me to attend in order to underscore the fact that ICOM relies on CIMAM for its invaluable support in debating and disseminating within the modern and contemporary art community, our organisation's values; among which, the appreciation and protection of cultural diversity based on the sound application of ICOM's Code of Ethics for Museums, is particularly germane.

Here, I would like to reiterate the importance of CIMAM's vision to ICOM. The fact that our Secretary General insisted on hosting CIMAM's archives at the UNESCO-ICOM Information Centre in Paris emphasises the importance that we attach to your work and its' permanent documentation.

The reading of the artistic and aesthetic evolution from the "periphery," as implied by your theme for the conference " Museums: Intersections in a Global Scene", as opposed to the traditional euro-centric reading, is something that is or has been embraced by more and more museums – and has, without a doubt, involved a considerable contribution of both individual and institutional CIMAM members.

Apropos of this development for example is the excellent array of exhibitions on Brazilian culture, art and heritage which are accessible in Paris today. To have the opportunity to enjoy the art of Frans Post and others of a later era, in counterpoint to the ethnographic and archaeological artefacts of ancient Amazonian cultures, and side by side with the extraordinary vision of Sebastiao Salgado, was a special delight for many French and foreign visitors last month. France's welcoming of another rich culture within its national institutions is to be celebrated, and hopefully emulated.

In the political and economic context of cultural heritage practices within the museum world, modern and contemporary art museums have a particular role to play as they assist in the understanding of social, economic, political and aesthetic currents that, in turn, explain perceptions of society as society itself evolves. Indeed, for me your debates on the subject before us have not merely professional, but personal, significance. As the Chairperson of a National Art Gallery Committee, actively engaged in the process of creating a new contemporary art facility in the Caribbean, I feel I am uniquely positioned to comment on the challenges facing the establishment of contemporary art museums in post colonial societies.

My experience in the Caribbean where new art museums have been established ( or are in the process of being established) in rapid succession, points to the critical role art institutions play today in helping young nations to establish their independence of vision and reflect their identity within a rapidly globalizing environment. This is critical when one contemplates the problems facing countries, small states like Barbados which have been branded to serve tourists and thus must struggle to be taken seriously as cultural producers of a high standard.

The challenges of inclusion and representation - as the 'art world' starts finally to become more global, as the populations of urban 'centres' also become more globalized,- are, how do these institutions respond to, and speak to and for, and involve these audiences? Another question requiring consideration is how to accommodate the involvement of small institutions and small nations on this tremendously mutable stage? I look forward to exploring such issues with you over the next two days.

CIMAM is, I am sure, sensitive to the multiple converging circumstances affecting ICOM, an international non-profit organization, representing civil society's contribution to the preservation and communication of cultural heritage also in the form of artists' rights and artists' work (as intellectual property, for example). CIMAM members are aware that we are at a crossroads in terms of defining through international norms and standards how heritage is being considered. Indeed, culture and heritage are not merely being defined but nuanced. An excellent example is the recently adopted UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Contents and Artistic Expression. When the Cultural Diversity Convention was passed a few weeks ago, the proponents of blind globalisation and commercialisation of all products met with formidable opposition from the greater world heritage protection community. For contemporary artists, commercialisation has its own set of ethical dilemmas, as for contemporary art museums.

Finally I should like to take this opportunity to remind you that 2006 marks an important date for ICOM, as it is the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the our organisation and the 20th of our Code of Ethics for Museums and Museum Professionals. And here I should also like to acknowledge the centenary being celebrated by our host institution, the Pinacoteca do Estado. More than ever, we hope CIMAM individual members and their museums, universities, institutions, and circle of friends will celebrate these anniversaries, and the theme for the 2006 International Museum Day "Museum and Young People," with which we wish to pay homage to the contribution of young professionals in museums, while also encouraging the participation of younger audiences in museum activities and introduce them to the world of art and culture, also in its most modern and contemporary forms.

I wish thank Alfred Paquement, President of CIMAM and director of the Centre Pompidou, for inviting me to this annual conference and hope that he and all of you present, will actively contribute to the ongoing discussions within ICOM as a whole on all issues facing the museum community, and, particularly, on the role of contemporary artist, curators and museum directors in reflecting on and contributing to the stimulating debates facing our organization today. My thanks also go to our excellent hosts, the Pinacoteca, for their superb hospitality last evening.

On all these levels, your contributions are greatly appreciated.  
Thank you very much for your kind attention.  
Enjoy the meeting, enjoy Brazil and Muito Obrigado.

## **“Museums: Intersections in a Global Scene”: Conference guidelines**

*Manuel Borja-Villel – Secretary / Treasurer, CIMAM*

As we know, museums were born around the sixteenth century, created as new structures of representation and sociability by the bourgeoisie. This new class needed them to better understand the world and to promote its own vision to the others. Clearly, from the start museums were closely linked to two concepts. On the one hand, knowledge: the idea that knowledge by itself was enough to make us better and to improve society. On the other, coinciding first with the expansion of Europe, especially Spain and Portugal, into Latin America and then to Asia and Africa, coinciding with the beginnings of the colonial world, the museum began to entertain the idea that culture is universal, autonomous and transcendent.

We have then two elements, education and colonialism, which will be the two key elements in our conference. In this sense, museums are also a consequence of the Enlightenment and its will and desire for a universal knowledge. However, as Walter Benjamin noted, it is impossible that the same type of universal knowledge that secures a norm and a concrete power could undermine that power. Very often museums with their activities and programmes look for variation, for that which is exciting, in order to awake the interest of their public towards a certain type of knowledge. But when this does not take into account the historical and social situation of the public to which it is addressed. When this knowledge does not consider the need for new methods and tools to deconstruct itself, to open itself to new forms of relation and sociability, the most we do is to entertain the public, to help them kill time. When a museum displays the products of particular historical periods in a universal historical continuum, or when it creates the illusion of presenting universal knowledge, the museum turns the objects exhibited into fetish, not giving the viewer the tools to deal with them. When these subjects are included in a collection or temporary exhibition, they must be displayed in new ways that allow the viewer to establish new links, interpret a past and acknowledge the present. If the museum is to have any meaning today we must redefine our notion of memory, being less a record of the past and more a projection towards the future revealing what society keeps hiding.

Ironically, at a moment in which culture has become more popular than ever and museums support with unforeseen enthusiasm education and outreach programmes, the need to rethink the museum as a pedagogical institution has become more urgent than ever. And this is linked to our second point: the museum in a globalised world. The process of globalisation is today more evident than ever. More than any other period in history the flows of capital have acquired a global dimension, conditioning our perception of the world and our organisation in it. Logically, this is not a new phenomenon. The *mondialisation* of the end of the twentieth century is after all a continuation of the colonialisms of the nineteenth century or before

Today, as one hundred years ago, the desire of capital to conquer places of production and consumption has no limits. The difference is that the territories now conquered are not any longer those remote places described by the great novelists of the nineteenth century. The new territories are those of our own privacy, our own spatial freedom and creativity. Once the geographical expansion appeared as exhausted, another source of production and consumption was discovered: life in itself. To develop new formulas in order to produce and consume new background experience has been an objective of capitalism but also cost of its inevitable ambiguity. On the one hand, in order to achieve its role capitalism must promote the investigation and that implies the possibility for improving our lives. On the other, the purpose of capitalism is not life, but investment, production and commercialisation in order to generate more capital. It is true new

functions of subjectivity are promoted but only so they can be reproduced, removing them from life and turning them into commodities, into some kind of *prêt-à-porter* identities. In our society, the risk of being banalised is very high; everybody appears too ready to adapt to the standard to the image that is expected from us. The objectives of our culture too diplomatic: culture as an element of liberation is under the risk of disappearing, turning itself into a product to be consumed.

So, what to museums have to do with all of this? Well, I think a lot. More and more museums have become privileged agents in the new society and we cannot avoid any longer asking ourselves what is the role of the museum in the present social and political situation and if knowledge is enough by itself. These will be the two points that we will be asking our speakers to address. The conference is divided in three sections. The first has to do with the role of the museum today: how we tell political stories today. The second will deal with how we exhibit, how we teach, and how we transmit, if transmission is really a concept, our knowledge to the other. The third will include the colonial point of view.

## Our Museums

*Ivo Mesquita – Curator, Pinacoteca do Estado*

From the outset, it was clear that this CIMAM conference would inevitably have a Latin-American flavour, given that the Directors of the event intended to organise an encounter with professionals and institutions from this continent, in order to join forces and broaden the spectrum and representativeness of this international organisation of museum professionals. For the staff at the Pinacoteca, the event is particularly opportune because it takes place in the same year as the Museum's first centenary. In this manner, this encounter is implicitly accompanied by the desire and hope that it will be repeated for the next 100 years. We hope that a new stage in the event's history will hereby be inaugurated, with extension of the relations between the various professionals and organisations that can work under the general umbrella of this Committee.

It was by no means easy to reach this point. The absence of a history of systematic relations between CIMAM and Latin-American professionals and institutions is already a starting point, since it constitutes a symptom in its own right. In the meantime, conversing with colleagues and listening to their perspectives in order to identify the questions to be brought to this event, two ideas caught my attention in particular, since they reflected the issues that require greater definition and understanding from a Latin American perspective.

The first of these is the difference between the agenda of our museums compared to that of other Western museums. While so-called "mainstream" museums and circuits develop a fascinating body of ideas and strategies that deconstruct the traditional museum, its underlying and ideological models, our main goal is still to build. These talented artists, curators and writers have nonetheless helped us understand the underlying outlook of our institutions and the various artistic practises surrounding them. Once again we are dealing with the same subject matter, since we encounter the same problems, share the same creed and draw inspiration from the same sources. Also in this regard, we have a vast and original interesting experience to offer. In the meantime, unlike the weight of consolidated institutions such as those in Europe which are actively challenged by the institutional critical community, in the Southern hemisphere we must build, and consolidate our institutions.

We work with a universe composed of different fragments, that can only be understood in terms of their relationship with our own process of miscegenation. We must choose the respective fragments, as always, and on this basis, establish foundations, check densities and identify pertinent aspects. Our collections, with rare exceptions, are the fruit of private and public sector initiatives without any articulation with the history or specificity of organisations, the products of unplanned one-off initiatives.

For example, the Pinacoteca – the institution that you have now had the chance to explore, first opened to the public in 1905 with a collection of 28 paintings of academic taste, mainly produced by provincial painters - undoubtedly talented - who'd spent some time in Europe. This seemed to be the approach of the city's first art museum. But in 1929, it incorporated significant modernist paintings - only seven years after the inauguration of the pioneering Modern Art Week: Anita Malfatti, Lasar Segall and Tarsila do Amaral. In 1935, it acquired a Portinari, from the previous year and also succeeded in acquiring academic works. For many years it was known as the Museum of Fine Arts. Only recently have we succeeded in implanting strategies and methods which have made it possible to articulate the museum on the basis of a perspective on Contemporary Art and the questions that this area poses in relation to the past and

present. It took one hundred years in order to defend a strategy that was pertinent to the needs of an art institution in Brazil, today.

The question of the collection is fundamental for the existence of a museum. We are well aware of our vocation towards contemporary art and have worked within this perspective. But we also have a historic past, which we cannot overlook - even if it includes tragedies, violence and shortcomings. Choices have been made in every stage of our history, for good or bad. Everything began with the baroque style, this first international style, which forged a fascinating visual and literary imaginary universe in Latin America, bequeathing an amazing heritage. That which existed before was destroyed or pillaged. That which survived still resists, bravely, in Chiapas, or amongst the *cocaleros* (coca growers) on the mountain sides in Bolivia, Peru or Ecuador. An art museum is not a priority over there. Other surviving elements were excluded and are kept in reserve collections or at the periphery of economic interests. At the start of the nineteenth century, when Latin American countries began to win their independence, the museums of the new republics, with the exception of Brazil which during 67 years was a kingdom, arose as necessary institutions for the new nations being forged, in the wake of the Enlightenment, the French Revolution and the North American democracy. It is these institutions that build the national imaginary universe and at the same time their achievements are due to the dedication of their professionals who have fought against the tendency to forget or erase marks that cause discomfort, which bring back unpleasant memories within the official history. For example at the end of the slavery era in 1888, all the archives and documents on the period of almost three centuries of traffic and exploitation of slaves, were destroyed as a result of government orders, because they were a source of shame for the nascent republic in Brazil. It was only in 2002 that the first museum was opened in the country dedicated to Afro-Brazilian culture - not as an official initiative but as a personal project of an artist and collector dedicated to this issue.

That's why we need collections. Before any work with a section of the public in particular, our main commitment is to nurture basic education projects that meet the needs of our society and contribute to the formation of the individual, the critical subject and the citizen. At the same time, we have to target our activities to the people most directly associated to the museum: our relations with artists and collectors, because we depend on these in order to continue to develop our collections. With galleries, because we require a consolidated circuit, a strong economy in the sector, with new patrons, companies and corporations, that fill the role of the State that has withdrawn from the question of culture, in return for marketing and tax breaks. The new utopia of the museum.

Notwithstanding these trends, our utopias have not been inverted. They are based on the same intellectual model that seeks and dreams of a harmonised, balanced and just society. Indigenism, Anthropophagy, Criolisms, Brasília form part of the utopia of western, Jewish-Christian and capitalist modernism, from the perspective of the various cultural specificities of the Northern part of the West. Their effectiveness as an intellectual model require a specific contribution to the archive of utopias. But they do not differ from any other Utopian project. For example in today's Brazil, the utopia of the Labour Party government is agonising in an unprecedented moral and political crisis in our country, in a pathetic and shameful process, that was inconceivable for voters three years ago. In the meantime, although we may be downcast and depressed, we should see that what this crisis reveals is that our left-wing parties - as in many other parts of the world - don't have a project, or alternative to the globalised capitalist model.

A second question is that of economics. First and foremost, I'd like to state for the record for subsequent discussion: it's very difficult for professionals of Latin American museums to be members of CIMAM due to the cost of membership and subscription to conferences. 480 euros is a lot of money in Latin America! But the crucial question concerns the growing number of exhibitions that cross the Atlantic from North to South. They are always welcome, because if well produced, they provide us with information concerning a history of which we have few records, but which we feel that we form a part of. The problem is that these exhibitions are offered as closed packages. Perhaps they could generate better results, leaving some permanent marks rather than serving as a fleeting spectacle, that many of them may represent, if we try out new models, on the basis of a more effective interchange, and consideration of the demands and programmes of the host institutions. Last year, we hosted a magnificent selection of works pertaining to the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. However instead of showing the set of works organised on the basis of a chronology solely of works from the North, the curators of the Stedelijk Museum and the Pinacoteca pooled together their collections and achieved a more comprehensive narrative - where the north encountered the south.

As a result, during a four-month period it was a privilege to see Oiticica next to Rothko, Clark with Donald Judd. It was also much more important to show to the Brazilian public a wider and more generous overview of Western art. It is important to remember, in a period of globalised markets, that all commerce is an exchange, and therefore should always involve two hands.

I'm not proposing a victim discourse. We're not victims. Nowadays we're responsible for the decisions taken and for our own self-colonisation. That's the course of events that has been dictated by history and we will all win or fail together. Latin America was the beginning of a process that we now call globalisation, which began in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the Portuguese fleets landed in Japan and left 200 or so words that are still in use today. At the same time, in this continent we're about to commemorate 200 years as nations founded on republican traditions, and our colonial past is thus part of a collective memory with a considerable critical and historiographic production.

Here we're always joining together the pieces and small fragments of many races, histories and different cultures. I believe that our difference lies in the fact that we are of a mixed breed rather than being hybrid. A hybrid product suggests something that was developed in the laboratory, planned and developed under scientific control, clean, like seeds, flowers, fruits and genes. A mixed breed on the contrary is the result of shock, friction, an encounter/confrontation of primary impulses, desires, relationships of love and hate. We represent the New World, where the colonialists expatriated the Natives, subsequently confining them to reserves far removed from their original territories, in order to found and populate a continent populated by "*criollos*", the term adopted by the Spanish in order to designate all those who were born or lived in the colonies, independently of their colour or ethnic group. It's worthwhile remembering that at the start of the 18th century, the Spanish court, in a decision inspired by the teachings of Kant, decided to draw up a racial map of its colonies in America, in an attempt to identify the various forms of mixed breeding that were being established there and which were corrupting the European racial categories. The documents of this ethnic cartography of the new world include the famous "Caste Paintings", that attempt to illustrate the new races that were emerging in America.

Beyond this racial peculiarity, the civilisation that developed here i.e. that of the capitalist West, as in many other parts of the world, was forged in the name of God and business. However it should always be remembered that Psychoanalysis is a discipline that flourished in Latin America – an important part of the programme of local

Modernity – and which produced a unique and original contribution to this field. As a result of all these factors, we do our best in Museums, without any sense of resentment, manichaeisms or guilt. Let's pave a way forward. The important thing is to keep things moving. It's imperative that we never stop talking or doing.

## **To See and be Seen: A Micropolitics of the Image**

*Maurizio Lazzarato*

How to explain the failure of the project for a European constitution? That's what everyone would like to know. But the contemporary political landscape doesn't even offer the beginnings of an answer.

An artistic project can help us to ask the question of Europe differently, and to explore its evolution in a space that goes beyond the old dream of European Enlightenment. In fact, the projected constitution still postulated the unity and identity of the European peoples, a dream that lasted until the late nineteenth century (up to Nietzsche, for example), and was still at the foundations of European policy during the post-war period.

*Timescapes* presents us with an entirely different landscape. By exploring a European project that extends all the way to Tajikistan and other countries of the former Soviet Union, by way of the Balkans, Greece and Turkey, *Timescapes* reveals a Europe that is not frozen into nation-states, but an evolving Europe, in the process of becoming, open toward China. This project calls for the construction of highway and rail infrastructures, the construction of pipelines to bring oil, and of infrastructures to bring information, images and sounds. Following in the footsteps of Marco Polo, it claims to be a 'new silk road'. Lacking any such evocative power, however, it is more prosaically called 'Trans Asian Highways'.

The transportation of commodities, of raw materials, of labour power and information from China to Europe: this is an ambitiously neo-colonial capitalist project that rediscovers Bismark's idea of constructing a rail corridor from Germany to the Orient (Berlin-Baghdad), but also continues the project of the 'Highway of Fraternity' constructed by Tito's communist youth, in order to link Europe to the south-eastern countries.

The project is established on the basis of macro-political policies that imply relations between the European institutions and the governments of the countries traversed by these infrastructures. *Timescapes*, on the contrary, explores the evolution of this geopolitical space and of the populations living there from the departure points of the micro-political dynamics of emigration, the forced displacement of populations, the 'diasporic movements' that millions of people are obliged to follow, whether inside the different countries (internal emigration) or to Europe (external emigration).

### **Working on or with?**

*Timescapes* is a video project: it aims to see and make visible what is happening in this space at the confines of Europe. To see and make visible what the politicians and the media don't see and don't make visible, by re-actualising one of the potentials that cinema has never really fulfilled: not only seeing stories and making them visible, but seeing history and making it visible (even if here, unlike Godard's cinema, it is the 'process', what is in the midst of happening, that the camera seeks to grasp and explore).

The departure-point of the project is the 'rehearsal' of the trip that Angela Melitopoulos, who at the initiative of *Timescapes*, has taken every summer with her family and thousands of other immigrants (Greeks, Turks, Yugoslavs, etc.). A trip from Germany

to Greece, the country of her father, by the pathways that are now the object of the Trans Asian project.

Angela Melitopoulos had two possibilities. Both produce images 'on' this geopolitical space and 'on' its populations, by carrying out a film with the most traditional methods: travelling around with her personal viewpoint, armed with a camera-eye, following the traces of the 'diasporic movements', exploring and filming the things and people that are involved in or excluded by the transformations shaking up these 'landscapes', etc. Or not working 'on', but working 'with': that is, confronting the choice of themes, the style of filming, the ways of linking one image to another, with the choices, styles and mannerisms of other video-makers who live and work along these 'corridors'.

Seeing reality with her own camera-eye and/or also seeing it with the camera-eyes of others implies very different productive devices (*dispositifs*). In the first case, the other is simply there to be observed. In this way one repeats a well-known and recurrent posture of the Western cultures toward the other: observation, meticulous description in order to catalogue and establish hierarchical orders. The observation can be both understanding and suspicious, benevolent or dominating, but that's not what matters. Whether s/he is under the gaze of the anthropologist, the filmmaker (politicised or not), the television or the tourist, the other is always in the same position: in front of the camera, seen, observed, catalogued.

The approach of working 'with' implies that the image must be 'negotiated,' constructed with the 'other'. It becomes the object of a confrontation, a dissensual process; it comes to form one of the stakes of the project.

Choosing this second approach, Angela Melitopoulos decided to involve a video artist from Belgrade (who works on the post-war situation in Serbia), a filmmaker from Athens (who uses both fiction and documentary to film a square at the base of the Acropolis that serves as a meeting-place for migrants arriving from Iran, Iraq, etc.) and a group of video activists from Ankara (who organise film projects on the forced internal migrations of the Kurds and Turks).

This is not to say that the first choice would be illegitimate or impracticable. But the second requires an openness to political and aesthetic experimentation, to the test of reality, to confrontations with heterogeneous perceptual, sensible and political experiences.

### **The Micro-Media Device**

To explore micro-political dynamics and to see them, one must construct a micro-media device. To explore and to see a multiplicity of forces, to confront the camera-gazes of others, one must have a device for pluralistic production and editing. The mode of production of an image is not insignificant for its results (as Walter Benjamin points out).

*Timescapes* is an electronic platform, a micro-network that allows both the sharing of all the images taken and the circulation of the edits done by the participants in the project. The network constitutes an electronic archive (a database) from which everyone can draw, both in order to see and to work with the images of the others.

The construction of the device is not simply a technological precondition of the project. New methods of production of the image require us to see new aspects of visible reality, and new aspects of visible reality cannot be perceived and enter our horizon of

sense if there are no new means to establish them. The two things are strictly linked to each other.

In our society, technical devices are conceived and commercialised as means of communication. The *Timescapes* platform was not conceived and fabricated as a simple instrument for the transmission of information, images and sounds, between situation A and situation B. The relations (social, aesthetic and political) between different situations or individuals are not given in advance, fixed and immutable, but are in formation, in a continual process of change. The relations are not transmitted, but are constructed and created in and through the technical device.

The mechanistic assemblage must, in a sense, be reinvented, in order to bring forth the unexploited potentials of the images and their relations. The technologies and not only the images must enter a process of singularisation to escape their mass-media 'destiny' (standardised communication) and to open up to the construction of processes of subjectivisation.

In Angela Melitopoulos's view, there are a multiplicity of heterogeneous expressive materials in the image, a superimposition of semiotic layers, a co-existence of discursive and non-discursive assemblages. The image contains a plurality of strata, of affects, meanings, and events: in it, several levels of reality and several 'flows of consciousness' meet. These different semiotic strata are all component parts; they are all partial articulators of subjectivity.

The device allows one to see and to understand what there is in the images of the others, that is to say, what there is in their subjectivity. To read what the 'other' has selected and isolated from the visible continuum, to confront his or her way of assembling images, opens up new potentials, new relations. 'I feel and I see other things. But I also feel and see that I cannot read the images with my codes and my representational schemata, because I do not know their space/time, their off-screen, what comes before and what comes after, the moment and the reasons that triggered the camera, etc. The other can refuse my reading, say "no, that's not it," and then I am obliged to confront other way of feeling and seeing.' Thus there is preliminary work to be done on 'representation' and on subjectivity.

The meetings between the authors are a way of testing out different models of subjectivity, since each one is constituted by a cartography consisting of cognitive benchmarks, but also mythical, political and affective ones. They are heterogeneous. To produce a 'negotiated' image means producing a new subjectivity, it means involving and mobilising these cartographies of subjectivity, risking them and confronting them with the 'gaze' of the others.

*Timescapes* sets up devices that include working methods and modes of being, instead of limiting itself to producing 'concrete' works. It also uses the time of the experiment as a material. The 'work' thereby appears as a universe and as a vector of 'polyphonic' subjectivation.

### **Society of the Image or Society of Clichés?**

We live in a world where images proliferate, but where their mode of production is not problematised. It's just assumed as something obvious, self-evident. The fact that there are a few hundred persons producing images for millions of spectators (whether in the case of a film or a nightly news show) is serenely accepted.

In reality, the vast majority of the inhabitants of the rich, developed West find themselves in the situation of the 'other'. We are all regarded by images, which in

reality are 'clichés,' produced by processes of filming and editing that tend toward automatised and standardisation. We submit, without realising it, to a kind of internal colonisation.

One needn't go looking for Big Brother in some system of surveillance or control. He is to be found in the average TV show, the most normal product of the movie industry, or the most up-beat commercial.

Clichés are closed images, images closed in on themselves, without margins, without virtuality, without rough edges you can hang on to. There is nothing vague, nothing problematic about them. They are images without movement, even though they flicker. They are violent images, even though they are peaceful (what's more 'innocent' than an advertising image?), since they must be entirely accepted or entirely rejected. There is nothing that overflows from them. They are perfect images – in the technical sense – produced by 'the professionals of the profession'. Many of the problems that Western culture encounters in its meetings with the 'others' derive from the violence of the 'either/or' that these images convey: either adherence or refusal, either integration or exclusion.

But the power of the cliché doesn't stop short at the borders of a project, even if it is a micro-political one. In the manner of seeing and representing the other (whether in a Western gaze or in the gaze of those who do not belong to the West), the clichés crop up very quickly, and one must work on the image to neutralise their power of totalisation and closure. This is an ethical and political question whose urgency has been fully measured by *Timescapes*, through the confrontation with their reproduction inside the project itself.

### **A Device for Events**

A great number of questions emerge from the experimental work of *Timescapes*. How to make the image a vector of subjectivation and not something passively represented? How to withdraw the preverbal and verbal expressive components of image and sound from the totalising and universalising closure of clichés? How to bring forth the relation, the event that constitutes them? A relation with others, a relation with the world, with memory, with time... In other words, how to explore and show the world's potential for events, how to capture and make visible the possibilities it holds? The platform of *Timescapes* constitutes a device for events, to discover and use the power of event-creation that exists in the image and in the relations between images.

To give an account of the project's working method, Angela Melitopoulos uses an idea suggested to her by the Turkish group Videa, about the Oriental way of telling stories. In the oral tradition of the Orient, the departure point of a story is given by a series of disjointed images: a tree, a well, a girl, an evil-looking man, a knife. This independent series of images calls up a story, a sequence which is an encounter (an event). But other linkages, other edits, other 'worlds' are possible. We then have another series of images having nothing to do with the first: a city, a marketplace, a poor peasant, a rich merchant, etc. Their inter-linkage constitutes a different series. The two series are independent, but their encounter causes the stories to advance, to diverge (this is exactly the way modern philosophers speak of the event).

The meetings of images, their relations, and their inter-linkage into series are what bring about the story. It doesn't exist beforehand, it doesn't unfold according to a plan or a script. To tell a tale is to follow it, to be available and open to the event of an encounter between images, and between independent series of images.

For Angela Melitopoulos this is also the best way to make a documentary and particularly a documentary about minorities, since their way of acting doesn't unfold according to a plan written out in advance, but by seizing possibilities, meetings, grasping the event-potential of the world.

The movement of migrants doesn't happen in a linear way, but as events: one encounters someone or something and these meetings open up possibilities; one begins to travel, other meetings happen, the paths diverge, etc. It's not a linear way of acting, organised in advance.

Telling a story means remaining in the flux of becoming where something happens: it means assembling, connecting images to discover unpredictable, untimely relations.

We can take another lesson from the experience of *Timescapes*: specific aspects of reality can only be understood in relation to specific methods that serve to express it.

### **Weaving and Knots**

In *Passing Drama* Angela Melitopoulos had already shown that the electronic image of video is very different from the filmic image. To speak of this she used the beautiful metaphor of weaving. The electronic image is not an impression of light on a chemical medium (the film), but an interweaving of the threads (flows of light) which make up the universe. The images are the place where the different threads (relations) entangle and mingle, where they sketch out a refrain, curling in on themselves. They constitute the knots of the fabric. The work of the video artist, like that of the weaver, is to weave and reweave flows of light with a particular kind of loom (a camera and an electronic editing table).

*Passing Drama* was already a device that allowed for the telling of non-linear tales on the basis of an archival reserve of a multiplicity of expressive components (flows of images, sounds, words, temporalities, speeds). Here, in the installation project, she trusts even further in the dynamics of the event that brings about encounters between independent series. The relations between the different components of expression are no longer fixed by the editing. Through the installation that deploys the different components of expression in space, she lets the flows of images and sounds approach each other and withdraw into the distance, she lets the temporalities and the speeds appear and disappear. The weaving is vaguer, looser. It leaves more space for the co-creation of the viewer, the 'beholder'.

### **The Continuity and Discontinuity of the Universe**

The geopolitical space of the project appears as a discontinuous universe. Yugoslavia's dissolution and Serbia's isolation, the new function of Greece in Europe – its shift from a country of emigration to a destination for Iraqi, Iranian and other immigrants – the enclosure of Turkey with its internal emigration piling up in the poorest quarters of Istanbul for want of any European exit, the conditions of second-generation immigrants torn between two cultures: all these things and more sketch out the cartography of a fractured, fragmented, discontinuous world.

The different participants in the project film these things, showing them and making the relations between them visible. But the viewpoints, the things and the relations do not partake of the same experience, of the same universe (the universe of the West, which takes itself for universal).

*Timescapes* suggests that there are two ways to work on composition, on being together, on the combinations of these discontinuities. By totalisation and universalisation, as in the European megaproject, or by a logic that traces out lines, connections, continuities between singularities, without enclosing them in a whole.

The universe of minorities, of diasporic movements, is not a 'bloc universe' where things and beings converge on a totality, but a 'mosaic-universe', an archipelago-universe.

It is an unfinished and incomplete universe whose reality can only be known from nearby, by addition, by the collection of parts and pieces, by the interweaving of flows and knots. A universe where composition has to follow the cartography of singularities, of little worlds, and of the different degrees of unity that animate it.

An additive world whose sum total is never reached and which 'grows here and there' thanks not to the action of a universal subject, but to the scattered contributions of heterogeneous singularities. In this world of the incomplete, of the possible, where newness and knowledge appear in spots, at places, in flakes, individuals and singularities (and not only collective or universal subjects) can truly act and know.

The 'absolute and complete' modes of unification and the modes of pluralist composition refer back to the majority and minority logics whereby Deleuze and Guattari define politics in the modern societies.

The project has revealed that co-operation (between the authors) in building an image is not something given in advance, but something to be constructed. Multiplicity must be asserted, but by using minor forms of knowledge and technique and by inventing junctions and disjunctions that construct combinations which are always singular, contingent and not totalising...

### **The Europe of Minorities**

What the European project lacks are exactly these minor knowledges of composition and rupture, of invention and repetition. It is stuck in totalising and universalising conceptions of politics, shared by the proponents as well as the opponents of the European constitution.

A territory is a stratification and sedimentation of movements, of flows, of semiotics. It is made of relations, of junctions and disjunctions, of arrivals and departures, of hybridisation and linkage. Prolonging the textile metaphor of Angela Melitopoulos, we could say that the territory is a patchwork. European space does not escape this rule. The migratory and diasporic movements are constitutive of this space, for many years. Europe's constitutional dynamics ignores them, scorns them, takes no account of them. Only the minorities work on these connections, enrich these hybridisations, weave relations between singularities. Beneath the linear representation of history, one must learn to recognise the dynamics of events that constitutes minorities. This is the reality that *Timescapes* makes visible, at the intersection of aesthetics and politics.

## The Museum and Other Success Stories in Cultural Globalisation

Walter Grasskamp

Globalisation is a dominant theme in current discussions - not surprisingly world-wide. What dominates, however, are the economic and political aspects, at least in international best sellers by authors like George Soros. Less attention is paid to the cultural aspects of globalisation.

Documenta X (1997) and Documenta 11 (2002) did, however, assign central importance to the cultural aspects; already in 1989 Jean-Hubert Martin had exhibited the groundbreaking *Magiciens de la terre*. These events pointed the way to integrating aesthetic aspects into the discussion. But outside the art world the cultural aspects of globalisation continue to be seen as a collateral phenomenon.

Attention is paid, at most, to the globalisation of *consumer culture*. So it was no coincidence that the only best seller concerning the cultural consequences of globalisation – Naomi Klein's book *No Logo* – dealt with consumer culture, and not with music, fine art or literature.

Mass consumption has in fact left its mark on daily culture throughout the world and many of its brand products – in the areas of sports articles, cars or pop music for instance – attain true cult status. Art, on the other hand, plays a rather marginal role in this global consumer culture, as an expensive product for a small and elite market.

This market has insular centres all over the world, which are linked in a kind of informal data exchange. In his book *The Painted Word* Tom Wolfe estimated this world-wide art market and its refined staff – the 'global village of art' – to number around 10,000 inhabitants in 1975. Thousands of representatives of *old money* and *nouveaux riches* may have to be added in the meantime, but they still represent only a side-show of globalisation. However, artists throughout the world are working on this theme and thus give us occasions for debate on the future of cultural globalisation.

Of course, one should not talk about the future of globalisation, without being familiar with its pre-history, the era of colonialism and imperialism. Then, the question was not about globalisation in today's meaning of the word but about the business interests of individual super powers. The most influential of these super powers were European and the consequence of their colonial enterprises was a nearly *global Europeanisation*.

Even then consumer culture was the driving force, as it was commercial goods such as pepper or tobacco, fragrances or plants, cotton or wood, sugar or silk, tea or coffee which were of interest to the European markets. Goods like these determined the colonial transport routes and battlefronts.

The colonial transfer of goods and slaves not only changed the economy of the colonised world, it also changed the colonial powers themselves: migration and amalgamations marked the face of many former colonial power – in Holland, France and Great Britain, for example, and most dramatically in the USA. Only recently, in his book *Colonialism in Question*, Frederick Cooper called for more attention to this

interaction, the consideration of which has long been prevented by a misconceived notion of *political correctness*.<sup>1</sup>

I speak consciously of *interaction* and not of a cultural *exchange*, as that would sound as if partners with equal rights and gains were involved, which of course was not the case. This interaction has, nevertheless, great cultural historical significance for all those involved, colonies as well as the colonial powers.

## I. Globalisation and music

Music can be considered to be the prime example for such long-term cultural interaction. The migration of elements of African tribal music via the North American cotton plantations into jazz and blues can be regarded as an early form of cultural globalisation. It found its conclusion in rhythm 'n' blues since marketed throughout the world with its numerous branches.

When North American jazz adopted elements from Cuba or Brazil, it provided a further example of this inter-cultural interaction. And whatever can be said against the Christianisation of the Afro-American slaves – and certainly much can be said against it – this amalgamation led to the impressive gospel which in the 1950s turned out to be the blueprint for internationally successful ballads and shoutings with singers like Sam Cooke easily changing frontiers from religion to eroticism.

From the middle of the twentieth century onwards, this cultural interaction began to lose its previously strictly European and North American dominated character. The economic gains of course remained on the side of the cultures commercialising this music and not on the side of the commercialised. On the other hand, the international recognition of musicians previously known only on a national level also increased their importance in the countries of their origin.

Finally, in the second half of the twentieth century a marked respect developed in Europe and the USA for cultures previously only borrowed from. If a musician like Ginger Baker, the phenomenal drummer of *Cream*, lived for many years in Africa to work along with native drummers there; if David Byrne, the singer of *Talking Heads*, studied the musical cultures of Brazil; if Wim Wenders and Ry Cooder finally made *The Buena Vista Social Club* popular throughout the world – it might seem as if Europe and North America were now prepared to recognise the previously only cited cultures as being equal, if not superior.

But that is the advertising idyll of globalisation which is sold to us as *world music*, while many of those involved still see it as cultural exploitation or even theft, if their ethnical, regional or national music is traded on mass markets by international concerns. What some may regard as multi-cultural exchange, others see as one-sided commercialisation. Since Elvis Presley lent a white face to rhythm 'n' blues, which up until then had been labelled *race music*, this accusation of cultural theft is in the world; only months ago, Otis Taylor, representative of *Nu Blues*, warmed it up.

The advertising idyll of *world music* and the accusation of exploitation and theft are poles of a field of tension for which I can offer no similarly smooth formula to resolve the issue. As far as the colonial and global interactions in music are concerned, I have much more the impression of an almost indecipherable ambivalence. That is, of

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick Cooper *Colonialism in Question. Theory, Knowledge, History*, Berkeley et al. (University of California Press) 2005

course, a keyword, which sociologist Zygmunt Baumann used to describe the modern, and it also seems to fit here.<sup>2</sup>

## II. Museums, shops, and bars

But why am I telling this story about music? Some of you might have been thinking you were sitting in the wrong conference. I have told it, because it gives contrast to what was happening in *fine art* in the twentieth century. For a history of interaction can also be observed here, as European artists took their inspiration from other cultures – and more than that.

We can cite here the role of the African mask for Cubism; or the importance of the wooden carvings from the South Seas for the German group of Expressionists *Die Brücke*, or the exoticism of the Surrealists, just to quote the best known examples. In fact, non-European cultures were extremely important for the genesis and programmes of the European avant-garde of the twentieth century. This was already the case in the nineteenth century, for Vincent van Gogh, for example, when he took his inspiration from Japanese colour prints.

But this intercultural transfer in art was never so *skin-tight*, as it was in music. No phase and no example is to be found in the history of modern art which comes close to the intensive and complex exchange that led from the slave colonies via jazz and blues to pop music, from Creole traditions to jazz, or from the Caribbean to a kind of international reggae.

During the nineteenth and in the early-twentieth century, ethnical and most of popular music had spread, so to speak, ‘by foot’: you could only learn about it by hearing and seeing it directly, and so understand it in its milieu. Such insights into the early history of the spread of popular music could be seen in the series of films, which Martin Scorsese dedicated to the blues a few years ago.

This only changed with the industrialisation of the record and the economic concentration of radio stations. But even after this, direct contact still remained important – as when the Jewish American Paul Butterfield was welcomed as a harmonica player in black clubs in the days of segregation, or when *Booker T. and the MGs* formed the first and influential black and white rhythm ‘n’ blues group that still had to eat in different restaurants and stay in different hotels. Much the same was true in the 1950s for the British scene of the Calypsonians, about which a lengthy documentary has just been published with the title *London is the place for me*. So right until the 1960s, it was networks from local areas and small record labels that took care of musical amalgams.

If gospel, blues and jazz were predominantly formed and spread through personal contacts, the intercultural exchange in art in the twentieth century happened in a totally different way. For the European artists, who were oriented towards non-European formulas, only had pictures in front of their eyes, paintings and sculptures. They circulated throughout the world as handy consumer goods and could simply be adapted in Europe without having to get to know their original milieu.

The museum is regarded to be the main stage of this contact with non-European pictures and sculptures: in fact it was in the South Seas section of the ethnological museum in Dresden that the *Brücke* artists found their inspiration around 1905; Picasso and the Cubists saw the African masks and sculptures also in the Museum.

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<sup>2</sup> Zygmunt Baumann *Moderne und Ambivalenz. Das Ende der Eindeutigkeit*, Hamburg (Hamburg Edition) 1992

Such paths taken by art prove the theory of the 'birth of modern art out of the spirit of the museum', advanced by Beat Wyss and Boris Groys; the latter in his essay on the logic of the collection (*Die Logik der Sammlung*), which has also been published in English.<sup>3</sup> Modern art, which is allegedly directed against the museum is, in fact, inconceivable without the museum. However, Wyss and Groys are referring to the museum of modern *art*, but for the cultural migration being discussed here other stages of contact were of decisive importance: if the avant-garde artists first got to know foreign sculptures in museums and exhibitions, then it was not in the museums of art, but in world exhibitions, colonial museums and anthropological collections. The theory of modern art's birth out of the spirit of the museum must therefore be extended to the colonial museums and ethnological collections.

But even that extension is not enough, because there was another main stage of contact: it was in a Paris shop that van Gogh and other impressionists got to know Japanese prints. Thus, different kinds of shops have to be added to this intercultural scenery, shops for colonial goods as well as antique shops or flea markets, where pictures or sculptures from non-European cultures were to be found. In as far as modern art dealt with non-European cultures, it was not born only from the museum, but also from the multi-layered trade in colonial goods. It is even said that Vlaminck saw the first African carvings from Dahomey in a French bistro in 1905; European pubs obviously belong to this scenario, too; especially those in harbours.

In the European contact zones of the museum, the shop and the pub, there obviously was no chance of getting to know the exotic pictures and sculptures in their original milieu. And the artists were apparently not interested in this. They were more interested in using these unusual forms for their own ends: exotic imports were modulated in order to develop a new, radical art for urban, European markets. It is easy to see this as an early form of *appropriation art*. We still tend to see the individual avant-garde artists as heroes and supermen and overlook the context in which they were at work, in this case, the context of colonialism.

If European artists had little chance to understand their exotic models in the frame of their original cultures, the question must be asked as to whether they actually *wanted* to. Hardly any of them made the journey to the particular area which produced the items they admired. In 1914 Emil Nolde and Max Pechstein were the only German Expressionists to actually spend time in the South Seas. But their destinations (New-Guinea for Nolde, Palau for Pechstein) were German *colonial areas*, so both had to interrupt their journeys prematurely, being surprised by the outbreak of the First World War.<sup>4</sup>

None of the Post Impressionists went to Japan, none of the Cubists went to Africa, none of the other Brücke artists stopped off in the South Seas in order to better understand what they had seen in the museum and what had been used to modernise European art. Paul Gauguin remains the much-quoted exception, but in his case, too, his exotic destination was already a colony. It is no coincidence that W. Somerset Maugham, the disillusioned chronicler of the colonial milieu of the South Seas, made the naivety of failure the main theme in his Gauguin novel *The Moon and Sixpence*.

The Surrealists were the first avant-garde group to open up their artistic milieu at least to anthropology, admitting field researchers such as Michel Leiris. But the world

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<sup>3</sup> Beat Wyss; Boris Groys *The Logic of the Collection*, in: Nordisk Museologi 1993/2; German in: Boris Groys *Die Logik der Sammlung. Am Ende des musealen Zeitalters*, Munich 1997

<sup>4</sup> Paul Klee, who travelled to Egypt, is another of the few examples for this route to the sources, in this case archaeological admittedly, while his famous trip to Tunisia should be seen more an early tourist art tour.

travels of Max Ernst and Gala and Paul Eluard, which are often cited as examples of the attempt to get to know non-European cultures, are called into question after the research published recently by Robert McNab in his book *Ghost Ships: A Surrealist Love Triangle* (Yale University Press 2004). In any case, the complicated meeting of the *love triangle* of Paul and Gala Eluard and Max Ernst took place in 1924 in Saigon, that is on another colonial ground.

None of the visual artists seems to have sought so decidedly and consciously the challenge of understanding the exotic milieu as did some of the contemporary writers, the French Victor Segalen above all. The few artists who *did* travel seem to have followed the traces of imagery they could use. The others did not need to travel for the very reason that they could depend on the trading routes of colonialism to bring the exotic goods right to their European front doors.

This had been different, by the way, prior to the twentieth century, as many artists of Orientalism and exoticism actually visited the places and countries that they painted and stylised for a European public. The exoticism of the avant-garde, on the other hand, limited itself to the works flooding into Europe and adopted their formal contours without any knowledge of their original meaning and traditions.

One result of the colonial import of pictures and sculptures was of course, that the exotic sculptures were finally recognised *as being art* – admittedly a liberal progress on the part of European culture, fostered by art writers such as Carl Einstein. But in reality the exoticism of the avant-garde was the *last peak* of eurocentrism. It exhausted itself in interest in form and renounced upon a more in-depth intercultural understanding. The non-European sculptures were rendered aesthetic as works of art, and thus they were integrated into a European approach that tried the differences in form but neglected the cultural ones. This is precisely why Carl Einstein later became one of the sharpest critics of the colonial eclecticism of the European avant-garde, but without any influence any more. The long-term formalistic approach has only been dispensed with officially since 1984, namely with the broad and justified criticism that met William Rubin's fine, extravagant New York exhibition *Primitivism in 20th Century Art*.

### III. The chamber of curiosities

The aesthetic reception of non-European cultures had of course a history that started long before the avant-garde, namely in the sixteenth century. Already the predecessor of the modern museum, the European chamber of curiosities of the late Renaissance and Baroque, was much more closely linked to the history of colonialism than museum research normally cares for. This takes me to the *second* station in my rather short *art history of globalisation*. Numerous examples could be given of how the return of colonial goods to Europe inspired and forced the setting up of the chambers of curiosities; I will pass only two stages.

The first one has the advantage of being particularly exotic here and today – and also of being somewhat chilly for European guests – as it is Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark. This was previously the home to two authoritative chambers of curiosities: the chamber of commoner *Ole Worm* based in the local University and the courtly chamber of the Danish kings. The Danish colonies in the North Sea and in the Arctic Ocean, Iceland and Greenland, played an important role in both. It can be seen particularly well here how the colonies determined the collection areas.

(Both collections were not limited to the North or only to Danish colonies; other objects also found their way into the royal collection in Copenhagen Castle as, for example, a

hat from Sumatra or a dagger from Java in the *East Indian Chamber*. At least two plumages from Brazil also belonged to it.)

It is worth noting that the Danish King obviously had first claim to see the exotic goods if they were brought in on Danish ships, even if the expeditions had not been financed by him. The Swedish historian Sverker Sörlin dedicated an intriguing essay to this astonishing procedure, entitled *On Bringing Home*.<sup>5</sup>

There he describes how the very look the King bestowed on objects from the colonies was celebrated as the highest form of attention, as *ennobling through perception*. The foreign objects were integrated into the European context of collection in a courtly ceremony of wonder and curiosity, which apparently could take place at the harbour. It is perhaps difficult to imagine a more significant embodiment of curiosity than this staged look of the king, of a *royal curiosity*, which corresponded to the *chamber of curiosities*.<sup>6</sup>

My second example does not come from the cold North but is – in tribute to the location of our conference – inspired by the city São Paulo, which is known to have been founded and named by Jesuit missionaries. If the Danish example stood for the *political* network of colonialism, then this example stands for its *religious* network, which also had consequences for the landscape of European collections.

So the famous *Museo Kircheriano* – which for many is the epitome of a Baroque chamber of curiosities – was by no means a private institution, as it would appear from its title (which still usually includes its founder's name to this day, though it was attributed only posthumously to the collection). In fact it was an institution of the Jesuit order, founded in Rome in 1651, which after the death of its founder, Athanasius Kircher, continued for more than one hundred years until 1773, when the order lost its power and had to close the collection. It was only dissolved after 1874 and distributed amongst various scientific museums until 1913. All the dispersed objects were reunited again for a few weeks in 2001 for the exhibition *Il museo del Mondo* in Rome.

In this collection were objects of Brazilian origin, for example a belt and plumed staffs. Presumably they were not the only objects from Brazil. It would, in any case, be good to know more about the collection work of the Catholic Church in the age of colonialism, but that remains a desideratum of museum research as well. One of the questions that led me here is, if traces of Jesuit collections are still to be found in Brazil and if they were of any formative influence.

It is generally surprising how negligent art history has been in dealing with this topic up until now with only few exceptions – the first being, as far as I can see, Oliver Impey with Arthur McGregor in 1985 and Krzysztof Pomian in 1986. The *common* history of colonialism and the chamber of curiosities still remains to be written. It would have to be seen in connection with other things and goods that came from the colonies to European destinations, first of all with the botanical gardens flourishing at the same time, being the living and underestimated twin of the museum world. But animal menageries should also be taken into account, which later led to zoological gardens and the circus. Last but not least, the history of pharmacy also belongs here, as it was

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<sup>5</sup> Sverker Sörlin: *Om Hemförande*, in: Nordisk Museologi, 1994/ Vol. 1; German *Der königliche Blick. Über das Heimbringen*, in: Kursbuch 2002/ Band 150; published in English is his book *Narrating the Art. A Cultural History of Nordic Scientific Practice* (Canton Mass., 2002)

<sup>6</sup> The literature on the ideological history of this curiosity which was determined in authoritative fashion by Hans Blumenberg, Carlo Ginzburg and Krzysztof Pomian has just been enriched by the book 'The Use of Curiosity in Early Modern France and Germany' by Neil Kenny.

not only kings and theologians, which set up such collections, but also merchants, doctors and pharmacists.<sup>7</sup>

Like the botanical gardens and animal menageries, the chambers of curiosities included those colonial goods, which could not be consumed directly by eating, drinking or smoking (like, for example, pepper, cocoa and tobacco), or through ceremonial wear (like precious stones, perfumes and fabrics), nor by any other everyday use (like furniture for example). The more *spiritual* colonial goods, as it were, which could only be consumed by admiration and amazement, by looking at and touching, ended up in the chamber of curiosities. Collecting constituted the highest and most permanent form of admiration as a form of consumerism, which miraculously does not destroy its goods by use. In addition, these collections ensured that certain colonial goods of no obvious use value gained a market value, otherwise they might have been lost.

#### IV. The museum as globalised institution

So the Baroque chamber of curiosities were early agents of globalisation, as they brought objects from the entire known world to Europe, from which images of the world were formed there. The museum, in this early form, was therefore already an *institution of globalisation*.

But that is not its only significance in this framework, as the museum itself soon became a *globalized institution* in its own right: it not only acted as an intermediary, but it spread as a global institution. The museum as a structural and institutional model of collecting and exhibiting is probably the most successful European export in cultural globalisation. Museums can now be found all over the world and they have become such an accepted institution that their European origin could almost be forgotten.

Of course, there were also traditions for making collections outside Europe – courtly and ritualistic treasure chambers, for example, or the ceremonial display of the booty of war or political insignia. But the museum as an institution with a public duty to educate and with political financing must be seen as a European achievement, which found its way from eighteenth-century London and Paris nearly to the entire world.

As the museum began to spread throughout the world, the time of the chamber of curiosities was admittedly past; its cosmos was unable to keep up with the development of the modern image of the world. During the eighteenth century, the context for collections had already disintegrated as a sign of the Enlightenment, and the exhibits later were moved to the scientific collections of the appropriate specialised disciplines: technical models to the technical museums; mussels, stones and butterflies to the museums of natural history; books to the libraries; exotic objects to the ethnological museums; arms and armours to the National museums and so on.

This makes me rush through my *third* station, the dissolution phase of the chamber of curiosities, and the distribution of their contents to the scientific special collections of physics, chemistry, history or ethnology. This phase has also not been sufficiently studied, but its importance cannot be overestimated. For one of the most important results of this dissolution was that the fine arts were left over, as it were, becoming an

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<sup>7</sup> The chambers of art and curiosities have perhaps been considered for too long from a surrealist perspective and not enough in their position as epistemological and technical historical pioneers, so that more interdisciplinarity would be wished for here between historians and art historians as for the theme of colonialism. Recently the two German art historians Hans Holländer and Horst Bredekamp have convincingly pleaded the case for a new look at this tradition of collecting and for a new weighting of its inventory.

independent area of collection.<sup>8</sup> Only now does the special case of the *pure* art museum begin: it is purified of all admixtures to content itself with the academic genera of painting, graphics and sculpture.

(The Neo-classicism of the same time with its strict academic rules contributed to the strict isolation of the now fine arts from the original context of mixed collections. So when the avant-garde of the twentieth century referred to exotic objects and propagated their languages of form, it was also to be understood as an anti-classical reflex.)

Only after this process of differentiating the chamber of curiosities did the museum become a global ideal, that is as an already *specialised* museum – specialising in science, history, politics and aesthetics. As a specialised institution, the museum proved itself to be easily adaptable world-wide, compatible with different cultures. What is the reason for this astonishing quality? The museum is *a constant form of handling different objects, an identical structure for varying contents* – open to any sort of object and content.

The *national museum*, for example, was a model that various nations could use to present their various histories, regardless of where they were and how they saw themselves. Even hostile neighbouring states could use the same institution in order to emphasise the differences. It is this enormous flexibility which made for the world-wide success of the museum *as an institution*.

This is true first and foremost for the *art museum*, as no museum has proved itself to be as flexible as the art museum, both in time and space. In fact it must be seen as *the quickest museum* of all: fast in expanding throughout the world and fast in adapting the latest development of its item.

Once set free from the chamber of curiosities though, art has never become truly independent from what were once neighbouring areas of collection. It looks much more as if it has always yearned for its former neighbours.

This can be seen, for example, in artists' workshops of the late nineteenth century, which, in Europe, following the model of Hans Makart, contained regular cabinets of curiosities. Also the overflowing and, for many imitators, exemplary collections of an André Breton or Max Ernst demonstrate this. Above all the so-called *artists museums* of the 1960s and 1970s can stand for this. The great Harald Szeemann – to whose memory I would like to dedicate this lecture – exhibited them in 1972 as a department of his documenta 5; in 1983 the late A.A. Bronson published a book together with Peggy Gale on *Museums by Artists*; in 2001 James Putnam documented the latest developments in his book *Art and Artifact - The Museum as Medium*.<sup>9</sup>

The motivation of these museums by artists was not merely nostalgic; in looking back on more complex landscapes of collections they wanted also to be seen as criticism of the existing art museums, which was particularly true for the work of Marcel Broodthaers.

Modern artists' studios, artists' collections and artists' museums are impressive proof of how long and how often art, once set free, has yearned for the original context of

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<sup>8</sup> In 1934 Ludwig Goldscheider had the book *Zeitlose Kunst* published by the Viennese Phaidon publishing house which he co-founded. It was published three years later by the London Phaidon Press which he co-founded, too, as *Art without Epoch*.

<sup>9</sup> AA Bronson/ Peggy Gale (editors.) *Museums by Artists*, Toronto (Art Metropole) 1983; James Putnam *Art and Artifact - The Museum as Medium*, London (Thames and Hudson) 2001

the curiosity cabinets and still yearns for it today – as if it wants to use the magic stored therein order to counteract the constant threat of anaemia of a pure and autonomous art. The classical purification of art from everything not artistic was reversed in modern times by encroaching on the non-artistic and exotic, as if autonomous art were lacking the context of inspiration that it once had in the chamber of curiosities and in colonial exoticism.

## V. The universality of art

A particularly telling example of such recontextualisation was provided in 1955 by the first documenta. Although it was a pure art exhibition, in the very first room – through which all the visitors had to pass – was displayed a series of photographic posters showing archaic and exotic sculptures, as a justification of modern art. Works from Benin and pre-Columbian America were assembled here in the same way as works from archaic Greece and the Mesopotamian culture.<sup>10</sup>

In doing this, Arnold Bode, who planned this visual introduction, of course did not want to make any link with the colonialism of the chamber of curiosities, nor did he want to give a late echo of the avant-garde move towards the exotic. In retrospect it appears rather that he tried to reinforce modern art, having been outlawed by National Socialism before, by other cultures and traditions, even by the most remote in time and space.

This intercultural reinforcement was based on the then fashionable theory of the *universality of art*, which represents my *fourth* station. This theory on the *universality of art* is a product of the early-twentieth century and had its climax in the influential anthology *5000 Years of Modern Art or King Solomon's picture book*, published in London in 1952 by Ludwig Goldscheider.<sup>11</sup> The approach intended to prove a continuity of creative form from the archaic to the modern, from the earliest stone idols to Brancusi's abstraction, from the Stone Age to Picasso.

This approach included a global claim for recognition along with a historical claim for continuity: the so-called primitive and archaic art was no longer seen as a mere source of inspiration, but were included in a now universal notion of art, which of course is a European invention.

The theory of the universality of art was the climax of the globalisation of the European notion of art. It had begun much earlier with the world-wide success story of the art museum, in which the European notion of art was globalised. It took some time till suspicion grew that this notion of art remained European – and eurocentric – even after it spread, so to speak, *under cover* around the world, that is under the cover of the museum.

The second documenta in 1959 provided decisive proof of this, and is therefore the *fifth* station in my short art history of globalisation. The first documenta in 1955 had been a purely European exhibition. Of the 130 artists, only one, Alexander Calder, actually came from outside Europe. (The three other North American participants were

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<sup>10</sup> Analysed extensively in my essay *Entartete Kunst und documenta I. Verfemung und Entschärfung der Moderne*, in: Walter Grasskamp *Die unbewältigte Moderne. Kunst und Öffentlichkeit*, Munich 1989 S. 76 to 119; English 'Degenerate Art' and Documenta I - Modernism Ostracized and Disarmed. In: Daniel J. Sherman/ Irit Rogoff (Eds.): 'Museum Culture. Histories - Discourses - Spectacles', University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1994, pp. 163 – 194. On the general history of documenta see Harald Kimpel *documenta. Mythos und Wirklichkeit*, Cologne 1997 and: *documenta. Die Überschau. Fünf Jahrzehnte Weltkunstausstellung in Stichwörtern*, Cologne 2002,

<sup>11</sup> In 1934 Ludwig Goldscheider had the book *Zeitlose Kunst* published by the Viennese Phaidon publishing house which he co-founded. It was published three years later by the London Phaidon Press which he co-founded as *Art without Epoch*.

German emigrants of the first or second generation – Josef Albers, Kurt Roesch and Lyonel Feininger, who was even listed in the catalogue as representing Germany).

In 1959, Werner Haftmann, the mastermind of early Documenta, invented the enticing slogan of ‘abstraction as a world language’ for the second exhibition in Kassel. Thus Documenta appeared to be interested in extending the geographical area of inclusion to a global dimension, in exactly the same way as the then successful artist Victor Vasarély had spoken of abstraction as a ‘planetary folklore’.<sup>12</sup>

Although one could have expected that under the slogan ‘abstraction as a world language’ more non-European artists would have been invited to Kassel in 1959 that was not the case. The slogan was not intended as the valorisation of non-European art but rather as the ennobling of the art of the abstract, which was still finding it hard in Europe, although it had been developed there. In hindsight, the slogan ‘abstraction as a world language’ appears as offering overseas countries the licence for the latest Western recipe for success, but without any guarantee of imports.

Thus, apart from very few exceptions, artists from Africa, Asia, Australia and South America remained excluded and were clearly under-represented in the so-called ‘world exhibition of art’ for over thirty years until the 1990s. Only the number of North American artists increased considerably from 1959 onwards. With the invitation to US artists, Documenta only half-heartedly gave up its *eurocentric* image of the world in favour of a North Atlantic one.

This was also true of the internationally renowned exhibition *Westkunst* (Western Art) that Kasper König and Laszlo Glozer organised in Cologne in 1981 and which is to be my *sixth* historical station. The title *Westkunst* was an aggressive expression of what had tended to be unspoken until that time, the commercial basis of the North-Atlantic art business, in that only the home-grown, artistic production appeared relevant. The *Westkunst* exhibition handled this so nonchalantly that it provoked a question from a Yugoslavian curator, as to whether you had to be a member of NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization) to be exhibited under the *Westkunst* label.

The exhibition title had been intentionally provocative and provided in this way a handy concept for a somewhat complicated and also rather embarrassing fact: Europe may have exported the museum as a culture model throughout the world, but it was still reluctant to accept in its own art museums exhibits produced *as museum art* in non-European cultures. That was also to be the habitude of documenta for a long time.

## VI. Global Players of the art world

If documenta was not interested in globalising art for decades, other agents came earlier. In conclusion – as the *seventh* and penultimate station – let us not forget that there were already two splendid attempts in the 1970s and the 1980s to build up international museum empires of art. The first attempt was made by a *global player* in the chocolate and cocoa market, the West German art collector Peter Ludwig, whose undertakings, as is generally known, were followed closely by the artist Hans Haacke.

Since the 1960s, Peter Ludwig had been buying art on a large scale from countries with which he had already had or wanted to build up business relations – first from Great Britain and the USA, then from Persia and Hungary, and finally from the Soviet Union, as well as from China, from Bulgaria and from Cuba.

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<sup>12</sup> I owe this reference to Vasarély to Wolfgang Ullrich, whose book *Bilder auf Weltreise. Eine Globalisierungskritik* is due to be published in spring 2006 by the Berlin Wagenbach publishing house.

For a rigid capitalist, this was a highly strange mixture, as there was soon a majority of communist countries. Ludwig also exported blocks of his collection of Western – or rather North Atlantic – art to these communist countries, where local branches of an international Ludwig Museum were set up in Budapest or Peking, Havana or Leningrad. This international Ludwig Museum could finally have achieved universal recognition, if the wind had not been taken from the sails of the company behind it due to the evolution of prices on the cocoa market in the 1980s.

Ludwig could indeed have seen himself as the first great distributor of contemporary art with a global dimension, who would certainly also have included art from other continents if it had served his business interests. He could also pride himself that national cultures that were sealed off from one another by the Cold War could now learn about each other's art. But his art collection remained tainted by its dependence on his business interests: above all he was criticised for his willingness to collect only the official art permitted by the state in communist countries and to put it on the same level as the free art of the West.

This reproach cannot be made of the second *global player* of the art world, the Guggenheim Museum and Thomas Krens' plans for expansion. There was – and is – an openly avowed business interest behind those plans and the existing branch-establishments, namely to capitalise on the unused works in the New Yorker Depot, the icebox, and to reduce accumulated debts by franchising the label. But the claim of art's freedom is respected, although considerable concessions were made to commercial partners like fashion designers Hugo Boss or Giorgio Armani and to the German automobile group BMW.

For this reason, Krens had to put up with international criticism, too, about the internationalisation of his museum, which his business-partners could not understand. Why should a collection such as the Guggenheim, which can be seen as the essence of international style, not also have an international presence? This was discussed intensively in the 1990s – strangely more intensively than the activities of the busy art diplomat Peter Ludwig – and at least one argument remains valid for our discussion: the *International Style* of the Classical Modern, which the Guggenheim may possibly be able to prove better than any other museum, is not international art, but North Atlantic Western art.

But Guggenheim is not the only agent trying to promote North Atlantic Western art world-wide. The marketplaces in the global village of art have spread and grown and attracted an international elite of collectors who see that most of their items are equipped with the North Atlantic modern art tradition and charisma. Also the museums are criticised for favouring the same hundred artists world-wide, so they become more similar than different.

At the end of this zigzag journey in seven mile boots, which was intended to guide us through the art history of globalisation and the globalised history of art, this and other questions remain open: has postmodern art finally become a world language? Is it a suitable forum of dispute about economical and political globalisation? Is the context for producing art in Africa or Asia no longer different from the conditions in Europe? Or do we only have an apparently global art, in which around one hundred artists from Europe and the USA are collected and exhibited world-wide?

It may amuse us today that people in the Baroque period believed that the newly discovered world could be represented in chambers of curiosities. And yet we are

confident that our own museums, our documentas and biennials, can meet the challenges of the globalised world. This may perhaps amuse future generations.

Maybe the demands of globalisation on art, to which it has contributed greatly, are too great, and music is much better placed. So allow me a final conclusion. Although modern art regarded itself as being universal, it probably can only be international; and although popular music is anxious to be authentic, it really can be intercultural.

Panel Discussion I: Ursula Biemann, Brian Holmes, Suely Rolnik. Moderator: Ivo Mesquita

## **The Black Sea Files**

*Ursula Bieman*

My presentation will focus on the Black Sea Files, a territorial research on the Caspian oil geography, which is about to be finished. The project relates directly to Maurizio Lazzarato's lecture, since the two video projects were developed over the last two years in the same research group called the B-Zone, *Becoming Europe and Beyond*.<sup>1</sup>

I have been invited to be on this panel because my art and curatorial work has focused on migration and borders over the last years, taking a gendered look at globalisation processes. With *Black Sea Files* I have turned my attention to a particular transnational infrastructure and the impact it has on local realities, the Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline. It will pump the Caspian Crude to the world market using a passage through the Caucasus and Turkey. The new oil pipeline is the first materialisation of a larger European plan not only to pass the Caucasian Corridor and access the Caspian oil reserves, but to expand further into post-Cold War territories. A regular super-silk-highway is the long-term vision behind it, which will encompass a fully integrated transportation network linking Europe with Central Asia.

A western oil consortium headed by BP is behind the development and export of lots of new oil in Azerbaijan. The pipeline is a geo-strategic project of some political impact, not only for the powerful players in the region, but also for a great number of locals: farmers, oil workers, migrants, prostitutes. It is these subjects which are populating the video and turn it into a complex human geography. The aim is to read the movement and displacement of people not as a singular phenomenon but in connection with the flow of resources, images and capital. Because it's not only about oil, land and power, but also, and foremost, about problems of representation.

One of the obvious problems is that these days oil discourses are dominated by a US-centric perspective. From this viewpoint, petroleum history is represented as an uninterrupted sequence of portraits depicting great men at the historical moment of deciding on war and peace. On the other hand, international media coverage of the Caspian oil developments only feature the political elite signing contracts, rubbing new oil between their fingertips, or cutting ribbons at inaugurations. These images are not given high priority in the *Black Sea Files* because they offer little insight into the complex regional relations or local textures. The closing of major deals entails a million small contracts and negotiations, the pushing of resources at a macro level is accompanied by a multitude of human paths on the ground. In an effort to reformulate the cultural construction of oil, it is on these subjects that the *Black Sea Files* will concentrate.

The *Black Sea Files* are an attempt to write a fragmented human oil geography, through the heterogeneous collection of videographies and text, media clips and reflections. All this material needs to be organised. The project foregrounds the ordering system, through the use of files. I opted for files because they are an open structure, a case in progress. In fact, files tend to contain a unique combination of documents, whose logic often lies entirely with the author. In cases of transnational politics, data can come from geographically dispersed sources that are linked through their political relations, not always obvious to the eye of the uninformed. It's a very subjective way of organising knowledge, which is more closely related to secret intelligence than, say, to anthropology.

The video captures the gigantic material and physical effort involved in building the pipeline which runs across three territories and through difficult terrain. To show this effort contradicts most current representations of data and energy flow indicating a boundless and effortless, even magic transfer of energy. The most powerful technologies are those that are pervasive and unnoticeable. Operating in the background, they connect, inform, empower, and organise our lives. To investigate the infrastructures physically, as opposed to just theoretically, from a distance, is a surprisingly difficult thing to do. The corporation doesn't want to tell you where the construction site is and if you find it by chance, the pipeline corridor is severely patrolled. The corporation runs a severe image regime.

File 4 addresses some of these questions. It also contains footage of the evacuation of Kurdish citizens in Ankara who had built up a city-wide recycling business. The Kurds, we find out in a later file, are a threat to the pipeline running through their territory in Eastern Turkey. The eviction in Ankara was a signal to let them know that state interests will always prevail over minority claims. File 4 is a record of people's displacement, their urban struggle, their loss of land. It is at the same time a reflection on the practice and conditions of image making in the drama of the moment when a thousand citizens lose their existence in front of our eyes.

#### PLAY FILE 4

The sequence shows how I vacillated between feeling the urgency of documenting the conspicuous injustice of the evacuation and the reluctance of representing human crisis as a spectacle. However, I don't want to make remote observations and analysis: an important question for me has always been how to insert myself, as an artist, into the meaning making processes and engage in writing a kind of counter-geography.

Some of the files deal with the corporate land use politics, documenting encounters with some of the thousands of farmers who had to give land for the pipeline, other files yet stray around the wasteland of the abandoned oil extraction zones near Baku, or sit down with Kurdish nomads who have set up their summer camp near the pipeline terminal on the Mediterranean coast. Although the pipeline runs through the video like a central thread, it doesn't read like a linear narrative, but visits secondary scenes, unfolds side events, roams around the lesser debris of history.

A particular focus is set on Istanbul, one of the most important straits in the global oil circulation and also one of the major international hubs for illegal migration. The metropolis on the Bosphorus attracts 75% of all undocumented migrants who enter the country from former soviet countries through the Black Sea and from the Middle East. Under the threat of severe sanctions, the European Union imposed on Turkey to clamp down on irregular migration. While the European market sucks in growing amounts of crude, it rejects the people in search of labour who travel along the same line. In EU politics we see a radical divergence between the flow of human and fossil resources.

A particular kind of movement I have investigated in previous projects is female migration and trafficking. The liberalisation of post-socialist countries inarguably had an impact on female mobility and marketability and the Black Sea basin is known to be a major trading place for women. Female migrants trafficked from post-soviet countries to Turkey and Europe frequently use the route via Azerbaijan, by now a regular transit country for illegal migration.

File 6 documents a conversation which was taped at one of the hotel rooms with two young prostitutes who had recently arrived in the Black Sea Port of Trabzon, in the

presence of their pimps, the agent, and the translator, all of whom remained behind the camera.

#### PLAY FILE 6

Before the interview began, I filmed the nervous way in which the three women moved around the room, getting up, sitting down again, reclining, hiding behind each other, constantly reshuffling their positions on the queen-size bed in the effort of placing themselves in the best, or possibly the least, favourable posture in front of the camera. For the longest time, they rearranged their bodies in ever new positions, gradually becoming conscious of the humorous manner in which they were hindering my task and undermining the pimps' authority. It is this awkward choreography that ultimately tells us more convincingly than any verbal statement about the women's discomfort of labouring and exposing themselves in this intimate transitory space determined by capitalist relations. Yet with their pointless moving around the room, they also appropriated it in an anti-productive, playful, and resistant way.

Now to the question how this kind of work circulates and generates various publics.

Art museums have, from the onset, shown a certain interest in showing my video work, even though it deals with contents that are explicitly not art immanent. I understand video as a practice that is at the same time artistic, theoretical and political: ultimately a distinct aesthetic strategy, comfortably, but not exclusively situated in the realm of art. Investigative video practice is not a lonely undertaking, it relies on the knowledge and contacts of many partners in the field, and on the theoretical and aesthetic exchange with colleagues and editors at the moment of montage back in the studio. It wouldn't be conducive to this research to inscribe itself in art as the kind of institution that polices its own boundaries. My work facilitates, on the contrary, an open visual and discursive field where the artistic is not separate from the social but faces the challenge of delivering their complex correlation. It is a practice informed by a range of cultural discourses, space theories, gender and media theories, migration and human rights concepts, etc. What is more, my work is being produced in dialog with, and often enough, in collaboration with experts from NGOs and theorists who work on the same issues.

The mode of production of my work determines the kinds of publics it will have at the moment of presentation. A public cannot be artificially created, by sending out invitation cards to specific groups. The public is constituted by the way in which the project has been generated in the first place. Typically my videos infiltrate the channels through which they have emerged: activist, art and academic ones alike. There is no particular preference given to high art institutions. The art museum is one among many institutions where my work can be effective. A few days ago at a panel in Zurich we discussed the possibilities of art to provide a space for thought and debate in the midst of a steady process of privatisation of the public sphere, which is a consequence of globalisation. It is certainly worth thinking about what role the museum wants to play in this.

## Beyond the Global One Thousand

*Brian Holmes*

I am going to try to formulate one of the questions that a certain kind of politically oriented art poses to the transnational art museum. A question not to the art museum as a purely aesthetic or cognitive institution, but to the art museum as an economic and social institution: an institution dealing not only with cultural capital, but also with capital *tout court*.

The speakers before me dealt with two broad groups of ideas. The first of these, as presented by Walter Grasskamp, challenges the twentieth-century claim that the museum can be the institutional frame of a universal aesthetic language, and points instead to the impressive globalisation of what is essentially a Western or North-Atlantic set of cultural codes, including the all-absorbing code of exoticism, a kind of cannibal aspect that takes any sort of curiosity and makes it into something that is admired just because it is different. This, for Grasskamp, makes the contemporary art museum comparable to the *Wunderkammer*, or curiosity cabinet.

The second set of ideas, presented by Maurizio Lazzarato and embodied by the work of Ursula Biemann and Angela Melitopoulos, posits the museum as support base and relay point for an engagement with the outside, in this case the very infrastructure of globalisation, approached through critical studies and experimental devices for the production of artistic representations, whose co-operative process of elaboration is supposed to help re-qualify or perhaps even transform the infrastructures depicted. For instance, the Trans-Asian highway system depicted by Angela Melitopoulos, whom Maurizio mentioned, and the oil pipeline that Ursula showed us, which become a quite different experience when approached through the experimental devices of these two different artworks: *Timescapes* and the *Black Sea Files*. There has also been a further suggestion from Suely Rolnik that these kinds of devices can ultimately transform even the universalising structure of the West itself: the structure of the ego, which, as Suely says, negates the Other. Something like the infrastructure of our very selves can be at play in the kind of risky and troubling works that are being discussed here.

The amusing thing about this particular panel is that we all know each other – we're friends and colleagues. I write for the same journal as Maurizio, I've just finished working on the catalogue for Angela and Ursula's projects, I have the honour of translating Suely's texts into English, and so on. We are definitely not part of the 100 major artists which, in Walter Grasskamp's presentation, were said to form the basis of the contemporary transnational art institution; but maybe we are part of a more modest Global 1000 who attempt, when we can, to make the transnational art museum into a crossroads between art, the social sciences and politics. Our work is transversal with respect to the traditional art world and the factor of the outside is essential to us. We try to constitute critical laboratories, mobile theatres, virtual editing tables, and even experimental clinics for the exploration of possible alternatives to the world as it is.

Because of the basic decay in the political, economic, and psychological conditions of human coexistence, our star has risen a little bit, to the point where it is now actually visible on the museological horizon, which was not the case up until the late 1990s. In this context, I would like to take upon myself to describe from my own perspective some of the difficulties I see ahead for the type of work that is being proposed by the Global 1000. And then I'd like to offer a few ideas about what can be done to overcome those difficulties.

The first difficulty of the context, to go further to what Walter Grasskamp has said, is that the contemporary art museum as a kind of worldwide *Wunderkammer* has only become so successful because it functions within a massive economy of tourism, which itself is inserted into a dynamics of metropolitan rivalry. That phrase, metropolitan rivalry, describes the competition between major cities for the visibility and connectivity of human, semiotic and financial flows. The basic formula that contemporary urbanists have found for success within this rivalry has been to develop what is called the 'creative city', which is the overall product of the so-called creative class. See *The Creative City* by the urbanist Charles Landry and *Cities and the Creative Class* by sociologist Richard Florida, for more about these concepts. The basic idea is that cities must use cultural facilities and amenities to attract the most talented stockbrokers, scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, musicians, and of course artists, all of whom together are estimated by Richard Florida to make up a little less than 2% of the world's population. So, that's 100-150 million people who constitute what he calls the "super-creative" class: people who are making innovations in what I call the semiotic economy (which is also a financialised economy, of course).

Thus, there's competition to attract talented people, and behind this you have the idea that a city can be successful if it can attract the most human capital. This competition between cities merely intensifies the age-old concern of the most powerful economic elites for the accumulation of cultural capital and for the acquisition of that superior kind of mental and sentimental agility that is stimulated by the objects in the *Wunderkammer*. In a more general way, art has always been inseparable from upward mobility. Reflect for a moment on historian Immanuel Wallerstein's idea that the very definition of the bourgeoisie has historically been the desire to become an aristocrat: that is, to live off invested capital and thereby acquire the leisure time to partake in cultural life. Some modified version of this historical dream of the bourgeoisie is still an underlying motive for many creative class people, even those who just do graphic design or interior decorating.

The important thing for us is that the power elites and the cultural prosumers of the creative class form the social base of the contemporary art museum. And because of the contribution that artistic activity makes to the overall project of economic growth and upward mobility in the creative city, even the most experimental or risky museums are able to draw on the sponsorship of the elite; and they can also gain at least some allegiance from the broader creative-class public. All of this provides the legitimacy, financial support and interest for the decidedly minority critical and alternative practices of what I am jokingly calling the Global 1000.

Nonetheless, a contradiction invariably develops between the interests of the elites (the passion for metropolitan rivalry) and the appearance in the museum of a kind of art that is situated between aesthetics, the social sciences and politics. Let's face it: the kind of art that Maurizio Lazzarato, Ursula Biemann and Suely Rolnik were discussing is not about upward mobility in the economic sense, and you can only hide that fact for so long. If we want the star of these transversal practices to rise a little higher above the horizon, and if we want to enlarge the very small number of people participating in them, then sources of support, legitimacy and interest for this kind of work must be found outside of the financial elites themselves and outside the creative-class subjectivity they foster. And this, precisely at a time when the national states are abdicating most of their institutional control to those same elites. I am referring, of course, to the characteristic pattern of neo-liberalism, where the government withdraws and leaves to private initiative what was formerly done by the supposedly public state.

I'll return to the problem of where to find support, legitimacy and interest in just a moment. But first I want to update the picture I have just presented, because today we must understand the fact that global tourism, along with the broader economy of financial flows into which it is inserted, is coming under a state of siege – no doubt because of the huge inequalities that made it possible, or at least, that have accompanied its development at every step. Richard Florida, whose first book contained absolutely nothing political, is now talking about what he calls "creative class war," by which he means the revolt of the poor against the rich. It is significant that tourists, in a few cases, been directly attacked: in Luxor, Egypt; in Bali, Indonesia; in Sharm el-Sheikh, again in Egypt. It is also interesting to note that during the recent race and class riots in France at least one prestigious theatre, in Cergy-Pontoise in the western suburbs of Paris, was attacked by some twenty youths. They used a Twingo, which at one time was considered a kind of chic creative-class car, as a battering ram to break down the theater's doors, according to the newspapers. Now, one of the widely expressed fears during these riots in Paris was that levels of tourism would be negatively affected. However, they were not. The economy rolled smoothly on. Tourists are apparently getting used to this. A similar phenomenon was observed after the recent Bali bombing. I quote from a news article: 'Song Sen Wun, a regional economist with G.K. Goh-CIMB Securities in Singapore, says that even though Bali will probably suffer, the fact that world is getting used to terrorism may limit the overall economic impact.'

I stress this gruesome point because I have recently become concerned about the role that the so-called creative city can play in what might be called "the urbanisation of blindness." This idea came to me in Almeria in the South of Spain, near the town of El Ejido, where I was able to observe how fantastic tourist complexes are being built on the coast right next to zones of industrial greenhouse agriculture, where undocumented African labourers are employed under conditions of extreme exploitation, rivaling those of the 19th century. How is it that people can vacation in conditions of such severe inequality without being deeply troubled? What kinds of dark glasses do they put around their subjectivity so that they only see each other, within the narrow confines of their pacified environment?

The recent conditions in Paris, where dramatic social conflict on the peripheries left life in the centre of the city almost completely undisturbed, have underscored the need to look further into this concept of the urbanisation of blindness. My hypothesis is that growing sentiments of fear, lassitude and powerlessness experienced by the so-called creative class tend to stimulate the desire for ever more fascinating aesthetic diversions. These (which of course can include contemporary art) provide a balm of stimulating oblivion that the true "creative" apparently needs to pursue his or her labors. It seems likely that even as globalisation is coming under siege, this flight before the storm, or this intensification of the basic drives of neo-liberal subjectivity, will also tend to work against the legitimacy of, and even the interest in, the forms of transversal art that we have been talking about on this panel. I was told, for instance, that the basic message received from the Berlin arts establishment by those who had organized the Klartexte! conference on the status of the political in contemporary art and culture, was this: 'Okay, you've done all that, now we want to have our fun again.'

So what are we going to do if all these trends continue and if the pressures of increasingly conservative and nationalist governments are also applied to the art museums? Everyone has noticed that since the late 1990s, activist artists and social theorists have come to play an increasing but still minority role within the contemporary art institutions of Europe, and to a lesser extent, of North America. There has also been a very interesting opening to the former East, which makes possible an intense questioning of Western capitalist values. In Latin America, the rise of leftist movements

has brought some very strong political practices into the art world, particularly in Argentina, Columbia and Mexico. And now that race and class issue are coming so clearly on the table, I think we can also expect the resurgence in Europe of the kinds of post-colonial practices and discourses that first emerged in England after the Brixton riots of 1980, which were very similar to what just happened in France. After those riots you had a very strong emergence and presence for about fifteen years of very interesting post-colonial aesthetic practices and discourses.

All these different trends have been building up since the late 1990s, and to my mind they are very positive and necessary. But whenever any of these experimental political practices are developed to their fullest consequences, there is going to be a tendency for actual ideological conflict to develop and, even more likely, for support to be withdrawn from the non-traditional practices. In the face of this high likelihood of conflict, I think maybe some collective preparation has to be done, on at least two levels.

If people want to develop further these kinds of risky, troubling, exploratory practices, the first thing that could be worked on is criticism. A concerted effort needs to be made to stimulate a sophisticated and also contradictory debate about what the new practices actually are, how to define them, and how they transform the old definitions of art. If you think about Boris Groys, he has made some interesting moves towards renewing our understanding of the relations between the inside and the outside of the museum, between art and life, participation and representation. I'm thinking of the same text that Walter Grasskamp cited, concerning the 'logic of the collection'. Groys has a very interesting way of showing that the outside and the inside are related. Newness, in his theory, appears inside the museum; but it appears by bringing inside that which is outside. And Groys thinks that we can only see the new in the outside because of this movement of bringing it inside: a very subtle thought. However, I would say that it is necessary to go one step further and add to those two poles of inside and outside a third pole, which is social theory. Only in this way do we begin dealing with the complex circulation between participation (the outside, documentation, work with others, activism, etc.), representation (the visibility of these new things in the museum) and analysis and evaluation (the work of social theory). So this means dealing with the hybridisation of political engagement, art and social science.

Curiously, it is social theory that adds a truly utopian dimension to art today, because it asks if it is possible to go beyond small, one-off experiments and imagine something that would change society. The kinds of processes that link political engagement, aesthetic experimentation and social theory should be deliberately defined as one of the legitimate objects or fields of art. A more concerted effort needs to be made to show that these processes are vital, not to economic growth and upward mobility, but to peaceful coexistence, social justice and the sustainability of our lives in the gigantic cities in which we now live. I think we also need to theorise the kinds of society in which these experiments would really fit, because only then would you have a criticism and a public perception that is adequate to the experimentation. If such an effort is not made I'm afraid it will be impossible to defend the kind of art that is drifting further and further away from its modernist definitions, and also from its status as an exciting or titillating exoticism.

The second and final point, where we could all gain from some kind of concerted reflection, has to do with the actual programme of the transnational art museum and the way it opens up the experience of the outside to its visitors. The problem is that that over the past ten years there has been a very deep transformation of what certain kinds of artists do, but this has not really affected the formats of public representation very much at all. The multiplication of social sites and social actors for lectures,

screenings, performances, and even exhibitions is something that should really be pursued. The museum should find ways to project its activity outside its walls and to involve people who are not necessarily among the creative-class consumers. Only in this way can a real taste be developed for the complex human texture of activities that traverse aesthetics, politics and social theory. If this effort is not made, and if there is not some coherent, institutional support for the kind of art that we are talking about here, I'm afraid that the Global 1000 will basically remain in the position that has been sketched out by the theorists of so-called relational art, who are really something like the organic intellectuals of the creative class. That is the position where a relatively narrow transnational network of participants take each other as objects of exotic fascination within the contemporary *Wunderkammer*, while remaining more-or-less blind to the increasing decay of the world outside. I can assure you that this self-satisfied position felt very uncomfortable during the last couple of weeks in Paris.

## For or Against Museums: a false problem?

Suely Rolnik

The ideas introduced by Walter Grasskamp and Maurizio Lazzarato are situated basically in the same field: the intrinsic relationship between art and geopolitics. More specifically, in the design of current geopolitics, both highlight the signs of Europe's strong will-to-totalization, specially the place it ascribes to its others. However, the paths of research that each lecturer takes are not the same: Grasskamp outlines a genealogy of the art museum institution, in its strict link to the dominant geopolitics, whereas Lazzarato analyzes an artistic proposal, working in a reverse direction. In that sense, their contributions are complementary.

In this debate, I will introduce a micropolitical lens in order to examine the question of the place ascribed to the other and to show how the politics of subjectivation and creation depend on that. I will then propose a reading of Grasskamp's and Lazzarato's presentations from that point of view, establishing a dialogue between them; this perspective will enable me to pose some questions about the fate of art museums at the present time.

First of all, then, some considerations about the politics of relationship with otherness viewed through a micropolitical lens. Our access to the otherness of the world depends on the sensorial dynamics between two distinct capacities that each of our sense organs possess. The first capacity is that of perception through which we apprehend the world as form and interpret it, by associating it to the cartography of representations at our disposal through our history as subjects. Based on that, we project meaning onto the perceived form. Therefore, in this first instance, the meaning attributed to the other (not only a human other) is previously established. This capacity of the senses is the most familiar to us.

Likewise, the second capacity of these sense organs is that of sensation with which we apprehend the world as a field of live forces that affect us. This mode of apprehension is related neither to time, nor to the history of the subject. It is not interpretable and no prior meaning is attributed to it. It is a type of apprehension that is more geographical and spatial. It is then possible to say that it is the body as a whole that has this capacity to receive the live forces of the *otherness* of the world: it is as if the world penetrates the body, via the sense organs, thus becoming part of its sensorial texture. By means of this capacity subjectivity merges into the context and there is no longer either an object or a subject.

Each of these capacities of the senses has its own complexity. They function concomitantly, according to completely distinct logics, in a relationship of *paradoxical coexistence*. I will use the term *microsensorial* in order to designate the perceptive capacity of the sense organs and *macrosensorial* in order to designate their receptive capacity.

From a macrosensorial perspective, the *otherness* is composed of forms which are exterior to us – forms which we objectify and upon which we project a prior meaning. Yet, from a microsensorial perspective, the other is a live presence, which enters into the texture of our sensory being. This presence pulsates as an alien element in the cartography of representations we situate ourselves by, generating tension and anguish. The extent to which the discomfort of this paradox is or is not welcomed and sustained – in other words, the extent to which the living existence of the other within

our subjectivity is recognized – defines different politics of subjectivation and of relationship with otherness. Therefore, this varies according to the degree of openness of subjectivity to each of the sensory capacities and, above all, to the unsettling experience of their unavoidably paradoxical and restless coexistence that defines the relation between the micro and the macro sensory registers. In each cultural context there is the predominance of one sort of micropolitics, a fact that in part defines different production policies of subjective and objective reality with different degrees of presence of the other in this process.

In order to conclude this first part of my presentation, I would like to focus on two opposing poles of micropolitics. Evidently, they do not exist in a pure state in real life, since each singular subjectivity is a combination of positions that vary through time. This is only a didactic resource that will allow me to analyze some aspects of the ideas proposed to us in the two lectures.

At one pole, subjectivity is sustained in the tension of the paradox between the micro and the macro sensory registers. This tension functions as a trigger for the process of creation: it is moved by the need to integrate within the cartography in use the strange element that has introduced itself into the tissue of our sensitivity, due to the live presence of the other. This process of exteriorization may be achieved musically, conceptually, visually or even existentially. The result is a change in oneself and in the surroundings, a *becoming-other* of both. In this process, the new sensory reality – which had been only virtual reality up to that point – actualizes itself in the visible and redesigns the contours of the current cartography, constituting what I will call *an event*. This is a continuous process of production of discontinuities and ruptures from which the forms of History derive.

At the other pole, the sensory is reduced to the macrosensorial activity, which objectifies the other, while the microsensorial activity tends to be rejected. The consequence of this reduction is that it hides the origin of the tension between macro and microsensoriality (the pulsating existence of the other in the subjectivity). Along the paradoxical line between the two capacities of our sense organs, subjectivity builds a genuine defensive barrier that “protects” it against the lived experiences of the microsensorial. The reason for this is that these experiences destabilize the cartography of representations, by means of which subjectivity situates itself, and from which it draws the meanings it attributes to its macroperceptions. We may say that what is rejected by this politics of subjectivation is ultimately the live existence of the other (in this case the other is reduced to the representation that we project onto it). The denial of the other brings on serious consequences. It blocks out the process of creation, whose dynamics respond to the sense of strangeness produced by the pulsation of the forces of otherness in our body. This, in turn, bars the change of the objective and the subjective reality that it has the potentiality to engender. In short, the production of *an event* is barred. This is the prevailing micropolitics in the dominant European (and United States) culture.

Let's return to the terrain of art and the questions proposed by Walter Grasskamp and Maurizio Lazzarato, which I will approach from the viewpoint that I have outlined here.

Grasskamp concentrates on the Museum, inviting us to visit eight “stations” (as he calls the eight significant historical facts selected and presented by him). Throughout this journey, he elaborates a particular take on the museum that reveals the key role of this institution in the history of cultural globalization. Let's revisit two of those stations.

In the first, he makes a point of reminding us of the intrinsic relationship between the birth of the museum and European colonization – setting out the genealogy of this type

of institution, whose origin, as we know, goes back to the Renaissance and the Baroque periods with the emergence of the “Chamber of Curiosities”, called the “Chamber of Wonders” by the Germans. In these institutions, created during the colonization process itself, collections of objects that had been pillaged from the colonies were displayed separated from the issues that were at the base of the process of their creation, being kept apart from the devices they were connected to and from the environment where they made sense. Emptied of their vital consistency and their very *otherness*, such objects were neutralized and stripped of their potential force to destabilize European references and their supposed universality. As a result, with the reification of these objects, only their form remained, providing delight and tranquility for the European gaze, which tends to be exclusively macrosensorial.

The Chamber of Curiosities thus constituted a symptom of the relationship that Europe established with its others, the colonized. Given that the colonized’s live existence had been denied, and had only been apprehended by the macrosensorial perspective, the others were thus transformed into a screen upon which an image was projected; an image fabricated by Europeans and based on their own references. Having refused the microsensorial experience, the presence of the other did not generate tension, fertilization and *becoming*. The other was thus converted into a *thing* that could be instrumentalized.

In another station, identified with the eighteenth century Enlightenment, Grasskamp locates the dissolution of the Chamber of Curiosities, which can no longer be sustained by the image of the world created at that time. Objects are then distributed between different institutions, classified according to different fields: natural history museums, national museums, colonial and anthropological museums, libraries, universal exhibitions, etc. The objects of “pure art” are removed from these categories, becoming a field of *autonomous* collection. This is how art museums came into existence: they represented academic genres of painting, sculpture and graphic arts.

According to Grasskamp, the museum is the first agent in the process of globalization and the most flexible of them all, in terms of time – because it is the institution that succeeds in adapting most rapidly – and in terms of space – because it has the greatest capacity for expansion. While the Curiosity Chamber collected and displayed objects as part of the spoils of colonial conquest, the art museum, which has its origin in this process, takes to these same colonized societies the “history of art” – in fact, a history of the politics of European visual culture (and also of United States’ visual culture, since the 1960’s). In so doing, the museum became one of the main vehicles, if not the principal vehicle, for the imposition of this culture as a universal paradigm. The museum, as an institutional model of collection and exhibition is, according to Grasskamp, the most successful form of European export in the process of cultural globalization.

In the same way that these “wonderful” or “curious” objects, now defined as “art” were mixed together in the institutions that had preceded the art museums, such objects, now separated and converted into a specialized category, are presented away from the creational process they derive from: the problematics that prompted their creation, and the context where they gained their meaning as *an event* that tends to transform reality. According to Grasskamp, this supposed *process of making* art autonomous has made it become “anaemic”. It has neutralized the problematising force that engenders art, thus sterilizing its power of contaminating its receptor and summoning its critical force.

While Grasskamp examines Europe’s colonial past and the Enlightenment in order to consider the logic of museums nowadays, Maurizio Lazzarato analyzes contemporary Europe and its ambitious neo-colonial project, focusing on its trans-Asiatic expansion –

especially the transitory geographies of Southeast Europe, the Balkans, Greece, Turkey, and the Caucasus. The relationship that he establishes between this geopolitics and art is not focused on the museum as a globalization agent, but rather on the totalizing power of the media images produced by the so-called “cultural capitalism”. Nevertheless, what he presents us with can certainly be useful in thinking about the museum institution.

To the idea of a European Union marked by the logic of totalization, which has in its origin the Enlightenment, Lazzarato counterpoints the idea of a micropolitical Europe marked by the tension between different logics that lay down lines of connection between paradoxical singularities that are never resolved to form a whole, but instead compose a universe in process, unfinished and incomplete in its very principle – a universe at *work*. From Lazzarato’s point of view, art can be *an event* which brings to the visible a polyphonic Europe, in its tense and paradoxical dynamics, and which, in turn, actively takes part in the construction of another sort of geopolitics.

Lazzarato presents his idea by reference to *Timescapes*, a video project by Angela Melitopoulos that covers a journey from Germany to Greece, her father’s homeland, remaking the trip the artist took with her family in her childhood and adolescence, together with other immigrants of different origins (Greeks, Turks, Yugoslavs, etc.). The routes are exactly the same as the trans-Asiatic colonial project.

But the artist’s intent is in no sense to make a classical documentary about this geopolitical space and its populations, a genre that tends to shoot scenarios and lives abandoned by the transformations that convulsed these landscapes, making a register of reality exclusively from a macrosensorial point of view: a perspective that objectifies the other, keeping the other at distance from the filmmaker himself/herself and thus from spectators. In fact, what this kind of documentary does is only an inversion of signs of the image that the dominant outlook projects over those excluded characters: instead of demonizing them, it ascribes them the supposedly honored position of victim. Thus it participates in the very construction of this position in the collective imaginary.

Totally different is the position of Angela Melitopoulos: the artist investigates the *becomings* of that geopolitical space, the micropolitics dynamics of the emigration, the imposed dislocations of entire populations, and so on. In order to achieve that, she creates a device that brings into play the microsensorial approach to the other, revealing not only the tensions between different populations, but also the tensions between those populations and their images produced from the eurocentric macrosensorial point of view. It is from these tensions and through their process that a new cartography of images is delineated. Her approach has nothing to do with a complacent gaze that apparently places itself in opposition to Eurocentrism, but which in reality achieves the contrary of what it intends. The artist knows that from a micropolitical point of view those images are the result of an attitude that also places the other externally, according to a previous classification, independently of the value attributed to him/her. Whether valued or undervalued, the position remains the same: it makes void the disruptive and creative power of a live encounter with this other. Recurring to Lazzarato’s own terms, for Melitopoulos, it is not a question of making a film “about” but “with” the other.

Melitopoulos’s approach depends on the vulnerability to the other and on a confrontation with different perceptive, cognitive, political, aesthetic, affective, mythic references, among others. This demands a readiness for aesthetic experimentation which is simultaneously micropolitical opening. The artist invites video and film makers and video activists, who come from those regions, and who have developed their work

there, to participate in her project. This strategy in itself already creates a confrontation between themes, between ways of shooting, of selecting and composing the images, and so on. The outcome is the production of a series of processes of subjectivation triggered by the confrontation of those worlds. It outlines another type of cartography of images, which goes against the grain in reference to the dominant geopolitics and to the media clichés that serve as vehicles for it, which impose this geopolitical system as a paradigmatic imaginary map, supposedly universal.

The “work” of art, in this case, is *an event*: a vector of polyphonic subjectivation, as Lazzarato qualifies it. What this *event* destabilizes is the power of totalization and hierarchization of media images – filters through which those landscapes are seen, and which determine the relationship we establish with them. In Melitopoulo’s film, the power of images to create an *event* becomes visible. For this reason, her film may engender in the receptor a feeling of “trust for the event-based dynamics” (*dynamique événementielle*, in Lazzarato’s words), which, in turn, may contribute to strengthen one’s courage to break the mirrored identification with Eurocentric images. According to Lazzarato, another history of art may be elaborated through this sort of device (if, in this case, one can continue to refer to “the art history”, even if it is different of the official one). In fact, it is a polyphonic paradoxical unfinished history – a history in process – that participates in the construction of the reality of another globalization, which proceeds by means of the confrontation of alterities.

Both approaches, each in its own manner, start and end with the intrinsic connection between art and geopolitics.

On the one hand, Grasskamp asks if, just as we may be amused to imagine that in the Baroque period people could actually believe that those objects in the Chamber of Curiosities represented the other of Europeans, we are not equally a sure target for the scorn of future generations, in case we uncritically continue holding on to our idea of art museum, impregnated by its Eurocentric origin, functioning as an agent for the globalization of culture.

In turn, Lazzarato indicates a way out in the potentiality that art carries as a possible path for participation in the construction of cultural geopolitics, in opposition to the imperial map that denies not only the existence of *otherness*, but also the tension it provokes and the need to invent a reality negotiated as a result of this tension. But Lazzarato’s example occurs outside the museum.

In face of these two analyses, a question remains in the air: what is to be done with museums? The easiest way out of the predicament would be to propose their immediate destruction – especially in countries like Brazil, where Europe (and later, Unites States) imposed their version of “art history” as part of their cultural globalization strategy. This was a strategy of refusal of *otherness*, which, as a matter of fact, facilitated these countries’ submission to its overpowering dominance, aided by the fact that the museum functioned as one of its main agents. However, by opposing the logic of the museum, this sort of answer is still being defined from within the same referential framework, and thus contributes to the perpetuation of that very logic. In the end, the question of being for or against museums turns out to be a false problem.

The example given us by Lazzarato of the video *Timescapes*, by Angela Melitopoulos, directs us towards a possible answer. The question that emerges from this stance is no longer about keeping or doing away with museums; anyway, what is outside them can be an even more immaculately white and cloister-like cube than the museums themselves. This can also be the case even if this outside scenario is “trash” or is in ruins, situated in an abandoned factory building or in a derelict part of town. Those are

the areas and places where financial and cultural capitalist investments are made to cover up, with the striking presence of (contemporary) art, the urban, social or architectural dereliction left behind by industrial capitalism, glamorizing its scars. This kind of operation serves as anesthesia for the memory of that collapse – a memory which is exactly the element which promotes tension, inducing critical confrontation and bringing about a collective work of elaboration of sense and of construction of reality. What makes the museum or any other place a white immaculate space, untouched by world forces, similar to that of the inner space of a closed white cube, is the omnipotent pretension of the forces that sustain it as a neutral space, as if the participation of aesthetic experience in the production of public life were suspended in this space.

With Lazzarato's example, instead of the false problem of being for or against museums, what should be addressed here is the possibility to invest the museum with a critical posture, like the one the video-artist experiences, in a space that is external to this institution. Based on this, three questions emerge:

Would it be possible for the museum to efface the imprints of its foundation by the regime that reifies the creative process and that isolates art as an autonomous sphere, in order to take on the responsibility of promoting and of giving support to the power of production of *event* – the intrinsic force of artistic action?

How can the very preservation and transmission of the memory of art – the main reason for the existence of museums with their collections – be included in this process without it being submitted to its official history? How would it be possible to make the memory of artistic practices emerge, in order to restore their intrinsic critical vitality and their potential for sustaining a dialogue with contemporaneity?

And, furthermore, could the museum itself be a device for the production of *event*?

It is true, although rare, that there have been some attempts in this direction on the part of a minority group of museums or, at least, such attitudes have been taken by some of their directors (the MACBA is a good example). But one should expect initiatives of that sort, especially in countries outside the axis composed by Western Europe and the United States, since in those contexts the denial of cultural *otherness* and the blocking of the creative process with its very disruptive nature has even worse consequences.

I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to learn about eventual museum experiences along these lines, mainly in countries situated outside the circle of power in the dominant geopolitical map.

**Questions following the Panel Discussion I: Ursula Biemann, Brian Holmes, Suely Rolnik. Moderator: Ivo Mesquita**

Gabriel Pérez Barreiro: Brian, when you were talking about an art that is an intersection between social theory, political/social transformation, utopia, etc., it sounded like a description of so much twentieth-century, avant-garde, European or Latin American art. Do you think that this time it's different or will we also be looking in twenty years at the institutionalisation of that material, just like Dada, Fluxus... all of the anti-institutional, transformative, social movements of the past? Second point: including other audiences as a necessary means of survival. Think of my own experience of working in the United States and seeing what outreach programmes have become there, do you think there's a risk of that becoming a form of institutional marketing and the working class or ethnic audience becoming a form of institutional exoticism?

Brian Holmes: I am against the institutionalisation of art practices. I don't conceive of them as being avant-garde anymore; rather they are post-avant-garde because the avant-garde has become massified since the late 1960s. The question is how to deal with that? Within this interconnected, network society, what tends to disappear is the site of decision. I think our peaceful coexistence is threatened, we are headed towards violent times. I think it very legitimate for society to try to find ways to get out of that, and that requires a certain kind of work with institutions. But as you say, we have been through many circles of this kind, particularly since the sixties. When we work in these areas, particularly with the public... we are involved with the financial elites and we are also involved with this project that seems to concern 2-4% of the world's population. I'd make a distinction between the true financial elites – the top point one – and you look at how much richer that top point one has become in the past twenty years. We are in a very problematic situation that affects us all. We're all capitalists now. I think there's always a kind of tension... all the interesting projects seem to be at the breaking point. And that breaking point too has to be theorised so we can see it arises from other breaking points in society, situations that are not viable. I think this obsession with not being taken over by the institution is something to go beyond, but not in a naïve way.

Audience: Supposing we accept this pessimistic view of urban violence, etc., is it the role of museums of modern art to tackle this question?

BH: To the extent that museums participate in creating the situation, it would be interesting for them to do something about it, but on the exact level in which they are already involved – on the level of art.

Audience: Are we therefore more responsible than museums of opera or of science?

Audience: I heard the other day the reproach that artists should be going out; that the French artists are not in the street, not struggling against the 'State of Exception'. How can you go along with this? We don't forget so easily the pictures of J-P Sartre in the first row in 1968. But the problem is that for the last fifteen years post-colonialism has not been dealt with in art institutions. Here you could do it in a normal, intellectual and activist way... any form of discussion, but this has not taken place: neither inside nor outside the institution.

Audience: Why more in our institutions than others?

Audience: Because it is a problem of representation.

BH: And because in our institutions there are people interested in this. Unfortunately, in the others they are not. The fact is we do it. My question was, how can we do it more?

Audience: A question about audiences and cultural elites, and how we engage beyond that i.e. the problems of a wider public whose response is: Well, it's just a wobbly video.

Ursula Biemann: When I show my videos they are contextualised in a thematic way, so you know already that this is going to raise a discussion to do with globalisation. They are completely dominated by certain canons and I'm curious to see what happens if you open up and start to present it as yet another point of discussion, like technology critique has become a big discussion. But it's in the museum space: that's for sure.

Audience: I was struck by the dichotomy on the one hand between the spectacle of violence or class struggle that tourists are getting used to and museums are picking up on, and a way forward through social theory and critical reflection, which seems somewhat objectified or theoretical. I think the effective qualities of art have something to do with this and can somehow bridge this dichotomy.

Audience: It seems to me you've got to expand your idea of aesthetic is to include politics and social theory. If you have to balance these three separate things all the time, sooner or later you're going to get involved in a situation where the aesthetics is not so good but the politics and social theory is fine, and you'll probably end up with a bad work of art as a result. You are talking about issues that are ethical and moral, but if we go back fifty years maybe the world was a worse place: the Second World War, the Cold War, etc. The avant-garde finished in the seventies and we are now looking for something else. Maybe aesthetics as a form of ideology? Or an expansion of aesthetics; that always had this moral dimension to it? But that apart, there is always this question when you look at a work of art: is it any good? Goodness means many things: ethics is part of that, but not exclusively.

BH: The whole question of criticism lies in the question: is it any good? And as you just said, there are so many answers to that. But if you approach this question from an ethical-aesthetic paradigm, that changes the way you evaluate, or the way you *feel* something is good. I don't think that social theory has answers for everything: nor even the questions. The function of theory is abstraction. The reality of aesthetics is much more about singularity. I think the *affect* is that which *effects* you; in fact, what happens in affect is what we don't know. If you take that and link it with an attempted representation – that's where the museum comes in – then I think this third position of generalisation and abstraction is where social theory comes in. It's not enough to convince a lot of people that this is 'the good thing', but some version of this seems to be convincing a few: the one thousand.

Audience: Can you be more specific about your techniques?

BH: Well, there are so many techniques. For example, making political discussions in the presence of art - there's an urgency that creates the possibility to speak. There are too many examples.

## Discourse on the (Curatorial) Method

Roger M Buergerl

My first installation shot shows the first exhibition I came across in São Paulo. It is the exhibition that takes place in the baggage reclaim centre of São Paulo airport where I had to go to try and reclaim my lost luggage. So, the problem I am facing is that I cannot present the material I was going to present you but have to improvise a little bit. On the other hand this doesn't bother me because when talking about curatorial methods the only method I can honestly think of *is* improvisation.

To take up some of the issues from yesterday, I had the feeling that there was one term missing when we were talking on the one hand about a possible audience, public space, the troubled or not so troubled social sphere, about things going on in the street and how art institutions relate to that, and on the other hand talking about the museum as if it were a fixed entity. Often it is! And I know for people working in institutions to fight this kind of inertia, which is inscribed in institutions, is a hard task. My idea is that the term that was missing is exactly the term 'exhibition', where the exhibition functions as a medium, which has its own characteristic, its own logic, its own dynamics: a kind of transmission between the institution, the administrative apparatus, which is not associated with bureaucracy alone but also is a kind of authentication of certain kinds of knowledge, of a canon, of a collection, etc. I am not necessarily against that and one of the topics I'm most interested in – education – is based exactly on a kind of canon. To have something you show, you present, and against which you are also working, so this kind of corpus can stay alive and is constantly re-animated, changed, transformed, etc.

I want to expand this term 'exhibition as a medium' as far as I can. I want to include in the term exhibition not only what we normally conceive of as an art exhibition, but I would extend it also to the way, for example, a shop window is designed or how people present themselves to each other. I think exactly the correspondence or the ephemeral reality between logic of this play we perform in everyday life and the way art relates to its own appearance is a strong point, because being confronted with art, being immersed in the aesthetic, moves us to forge correspondences, relations and to implicate oneself into those relations and this doesn't happen if we conceive of art solely in terms of art alone. But if we conceive of the exhibition as a form in its own right, a continuum of which we are also a part, the discussion should then focus on the quality of the articulation of how an exhibition manages to implicate its audience in its compositional moves.

This is another local example and the question of locality or local knowledge or how we make accessible local knowledge or particular knowledge, specific knowledge, in an exhibition is a very important topic, especially with Documenta. There is no need to make Documenta on a planetary scale. It has a modernist legacy, dreaming of art as a kind of universalist language. I know that this myth is deconstructed, but I can't think of any viable alternative to it. And I mean this almost without irony. The idea the modernists had was that it is possible to initiate a kind of universal or planetary scale communication via form and colour and one of the basic premises of the first Documenta was to show art first as an anthropological constant and secondly that art is capable of relating different kinds of knowledge and geography.

It is true that the modernists somehow got the premises of the utopian investment of modernity wrong, so that it is not possible to claim modernity any longer with an

innocent eye. But still, we have to work on something like a planetary horizon for humankind, we have to work on some thing like the round of resonances that corresponds closely to what Suely Rolnik sketched out. I think that we can get the problems that are troubling us – not in the museum, but on the planet in general – can only be solved if we are able to create this kind of forum. And this brings us back to the question of local knowledge. How do we fit in specific kinds of knowledge and also how does cultural translation work? How do you make a link between an urbanist architectural practice in Lebanon and a critical discourse on city transformation in Guangzhou?

This assumes that exhibitions like Documenta are capable of doing that simply by putting people from different places into one place. The problem is that art is never really about local knowledge and even if it has local roots, it works on those roots transformatively. So that when I confront an audience with those examples I just sketched out it won't help to provide you with all the back ground information about those particular practices because on the one hand you would be simply overburdened with information no one can digest. And that's also one of the symptoms of the last Documenta exhibitions: that the output of publications grow bigger and bigger in order to take account of the fact that there is so much going on that has to be mediated.

It is high time to think of mediation as something beyond knowledge or beyond providing information. To think about art as something that has a capacity by its own characteristics to enter into a communication with other art. In so doing, it is possible for audiences to relate to certain features of certain pieces, without necessarily being capable of identifying those elements and fix them as knowledge. Because the problem if we are just given an impression of how a planetary scale exhibition might look, is that we often end in my experience with highly rhetorical demonstrations of geopolitical identities. So you then have your Iranian artist who deals with wayward women; an African artist with colourful textiles; a U.S. artist who works critically with the culture industry. Then of course you have your German painter. The interesting thing is to move beyond that realm of identity and difference, and I strongly believe that art has a capability to do so and the exhibition, by focusing on what Walter Benjamin called the exhibition value, is able to animate a space and a time for the viewer in which this kind of communication and implication of a viewer's subjectivity can happen.

[New image] So to come back to my ruminations about the legacy of modernity and correspondences as a methodology for overcoming knowledge as our basic resource in approaching art, I want show you an image of ambivalence. This is the fire escape of the Copan Building in São Paulo. This building by Oscar Niemeyer was built soon after the first Documenta. For me this image captures the relation we are facing in modernity. On the one hand modernity is over and we don't have this drive any longer to claim standards and norms for people. On the other hand, we challenge the task of creating something, like a common ground. It is my impression that many artists today are coming back to modernity in a kind of archaeological approach, which is sometimes sentimental or nostalgic because it is looking for something like a bond that has been lost, but nevertheless the ambition is appropriate because in the ruins wherein modernity lies after having been shattered by the totalitarian catastrophes of the twentieth century there are maybe elements which could help us to project this kind of common ground I just mentioned, as a horizon we have to keep in mind in order to survive.

[New image] This is a painting by Ambrogio Lorenzetti, mid-14th century, in the Town Hall of Siena. It is an allegory of good and bad government. The idea is much according to the current US administration to separate the world into good and evil, but while the administration is doing that in order to cement the existing power structure,

this is a projection of how the world should look. And here you have justitia handing over this cord via concordia – a funny etymological mistake – to the citizens who are bound together by sharing this impact of government. This a quite interesting painting because it doesn't refer to power as something that comes from above or below, but it conceives of power as something that runs through the social body, people taking it up. And here you can see the details of this cord and the way the cord articulates this group, this community.

[New image] Here you have a group that maybe lacks this cord. It is a detail from a photograph by the Dutch artist Lidwien van de Ven. It shows a group of Moroccan youths that wanted to take part in a demonstration of the Arab League in Amsterdam and burn a U.S. flag. However, this group were banned by the organisers of this demonstration. What we see in the whole image is this fragmented group of young men who are occupying an in-between space, torn between their own representatives and the Dam building in Amsterdam, a building that represents official power. They belong neither to the one or the other. This is position which is quite close to the position art occupies and this image helps me to access a term that is becoming more and more important, again a modernist legacy. I am referring to the term of 'bare life' or 'naked life', which comes originally from Walter Benjamin's *Critique of Violence*, an attempt to get an understanding of the dialectics between modernity and violence. It is a term that has been taken up by the Italian philosopher and editor of Benjamin, Giorgio Agamben, in order to characterise state power as being capable to divest the individual subject of all of its attributes, peeling it like an onion until nothing is left.

The question for me and for Documenta is this: is there a link between this utter, precariousness of human existence –which is not only an effect of political power, it is again an anthropological feat, I mean we are mortals and confronted with this fact we have to think of how we relate to each other and how we mediate our mortality toward to each other – and people's amazing capacity to transcend the world they live in and to go beyond themselves? So, is there a link between the apocalyptic dimension of human existence and the world we want to live in?

[New image] This photograph looks like a photographic rendering of a subject by Jean François Millet. In fact it is part of an exhibition that aimed at including or taking up 'bare life' into the exhibition's form, in other words to perform the same act Lorenzetti's cord was performing, to generate something like a common ground: a place where people can be. The exhibition took place in Argentina in 1967-68; it grew out of a whole ambition to transcend the institutional framework of that time and to create a ground where art and life could meet. They called this event the first biennial of avant-garde art but before I come to that, the implication of the institution in the articulating of the event, I'll show you more of the photographs, which were an integral element of that exhibition and the advertising. The artists who organised this biennial had something else in mind than the kind of event we conventionally associate with the concept of the biennial. So they proved that this particular format could be productively appropriated and transformed into an exhibition as a medium. A medium that constituted an audience bound up with a particular agenda.

Tucumán is a region in Northwest Argentina, whose tropical climate makes it ideal for growing citrus fruits, vegetables, tobacco and above all sugar. In the second half of the 1960s, the agricultural structures in Tucumán were transformed by a massive intervention on the part of the government under the dictator Juan Carlos Onganía, who spoke of a new liberal revolution and named its pilot project Operation Tucumán. This project was proceeded by prolonged unrest that had provided an excuse to stage a coup against the President of the elected government, Arturo Illia. The impact of Operation Tucumán, a huge wave of privatisation and centralisation, led to the closure

of many small sugarcane plantations, the rise of precarious forms of labour, and the creation of extreme social hardship. What happened in Tucumán, heralded by the government in a huge propaganda campaign as modernisation, moved the public and this was one of the reasons why the artistic avant-garde made these events the focus of their collective project. *Tucumán arde* (Tucumán Burns) was the work of artists from Rosario and Buenos Aires whose objective, in the spirit of the classical avant-garde, was to sound out the limits of their own artistic methods and forms. At the same time they worked on an information campaign against the official propaganda of the government. The artists themselves spoke of the cycle of over-information. *Tucumán arde* was conceived as a process and followed a precise choreography.



Photo credits: Photos by Michel Cluizel

In the first phase, several artists travelled to Tucumán, established contact with local union leaders and cultural organisations, and collected documents on the current situation. The second phase consisted of taking stock, conducting interviews with those involved, and documenting places on film and photographs, in a style that is vaguely reminiscent of the early Walker Evans. The photos show sugarcane plantations, abandoned factories, settlements, hospitals, the villas and lifestyles of rich, but above all the faces of the people. In the third phase, in collaboration with the trade union association, a protest exhibition was organised, that was shown for five days at the union headquarters in Rosario, in Santa Fe, and finally in Buenos Aires, where it had to

close after just a few hours. The exhibition, entitled *First Biennial of Avant-garde Art*, was essentially a montage of audio-visual media, plus appearances by artists, intellectuals, and experts. But guests were also served bitter black coffee without sugar, and the light flickered in a rhythm that indicated the child mortality rate.

So when we were talking yesterday about whether it is appropriate for artists to do something like sociological research, here you have an instance where it is not only possible but also quite necessary. There were no sociologists to do this research. And so the exhibition consisted of all these documentary elements that helped people to get an idea of the situation, to create something like a common ground in which people were no longer victims of the government, but actually capable of action, of becoming implicated.

At this point it can be proven that the dichotomy between sociology or politics and aesthetics is actually a wrong one. The question is where do those connect? And is the articulation of sociological/political material with aesthetic material a meaningful one or will it remain exterior to the task at hand and the exhibition fall apart? But Tucumán is an example that inspired me a lot, an exhibition that actually was successful. Besides those urgent points and my emphasis on documentary and photographic representation of the situation, there's also a strong phenomenological strain in this exhibition, a record of the everyday experience of how space looked and how it is circumscribed or limited by a certain kind of industrial production. What you have is an infinite oscillation between the phenomenological experience people have and the way the exhibition looks. And the result of this exhibition was that people actually started to talk with each other, to relate to each other.

[New image] Here's another exhibition that performed a similar task. It's an image from the first Documenta, which also happened to make people talk to each other. It's the entry to the exhibition where you had portraits of the major artists of the time –Klee, Beckmann, Kokoschka, Mondrian (all male) – and they were presented in a way that was on the one hand emphasising heroic feats of the individual, but they were also quite accessible and ordinary, in the photographic portraiture style of the times.

So, a brief introduction to the exhibition. This was an art exhibition, but not only an art exhibition. It was a reaction to a particular trauma, and for a highly traumatised audience The Germans audience, which felt itself on the one hand implicated in the German State crime but was on the other hand completely incapable of relating to this crime and to the destruction of its own cities. It could be argued that this inability to mourn and to face the condition of bare life contributed to the utter facelessness of the German cities, Kassel in particular. Documenta was part of the Federal Garden Show, a huge State financed operation that went into all those destroyed areas in order basically to cover up the rubble. The Federal Garden Show in 1955 attracted around 3.5 million visitors and Documenta was just one element and attracted around 130,000, but it dealt with much the same situation. And the way dealt with it corresponds closely to the *Tucumán arde* exhibition. It related material or life experience that was invested with people's subjectivity and history to modern art.

[New image] The big hall with white washed walls was in the provisionally patched-up ruin of the Museum Fridericianum. The art was either placed on cheap cardboard material or other elements from construction sites: elements that were familiar to the generation of the reconstruction era. Huge sheets of black or white plastic separated the rooms, like satin curtains. In some instances, the plastic also served as a background for a painting.

Let us take a closer look at what this kind of material did in terms of the reception of art. Take, for example, a Mondrian mounted on black-painted cardboard. The painterly texture of the cardboard must either have emphasised Mondrian's problematic down-playing of surface value or underscored his painting's subtle textures. It's hard to decide which. But that's the point, that the display doesn't direct you toward a certain reading but opens up the space in which the painting can start to communicate with the environment and thereby taking up the viewer in this process. Another example to make this point clearer would be Picasso's portrait of Marie-Therese Walter from the 1930s, on loan from MoMA. Again the painting is mounted on a black ground, but here it is stretched plastic. What does it do to the painting? Does it expose a basically false tone in Picasso's kitschy rendering of heterosexual relationality? Does it expose the highly synthetic character of that painting? Or does the tacky background reveal Picasso's true and singular effort to cling to an immediate and harmonious sensuality in spite of the so-called battle between the sexes that same battle Picasso never tired of depicting? Again, it doesn't matter which reading is correct: what matters is how the display was made an active agent in revealing the painting's depth and beauty.

The crucial point of Documenta's exhibition design is not the formal design as such, but its relation to the viewer. In relation to subjectivity, the correspondence of highly charged surfaces, suspending the viewer in an infinite play of oscillations between aesthetic forms and forms of being.

It was high time to acknowledge this involvement, or rather to go further, to actively engage in the relationship between aesthetics and subjectivity in order to forge something like an emancipated viewership. Here I am not talking about the myth of the active viewer-consumer who is the sole broker of meaning: we have to communicate and stick to the fact that there will always be a gap separating the art from the viewer, a gap that is equally the condition of any genuine connection. Looking affirmatively cannot be imposed on the viewer. It is his/her decision only. So I would argue that what the first Documenta achieved is presenting art that was on the one hand blocking your vision and forcing yourself (again, a legacy of modernity) to reflect upon your own perceptual modes. It was confronting a viewer with an art that blocked his/her vision but on the other hand it animated an experience by investing it with so much phenomenological richness.

[New image] This is a photograph by Austrian artist Ines Doujak that grew out of a collaboration between a group of second-generation migrants and herself. The general aim of that collaboration was to arrive at an image that would fall into the trap of representing migrant kids either as a victim or as a bearer of some kind of triumphalist folklore-ism. The very dialectics I sketched out in relation to Documenta and the exhibition's presentational modes can be traced via this photograph. And although the artist took the image, she was not doing much more than sustaining a gesture performed by those two teenagers. In other words, this is an image of the author as receiver, an image that invites the audience to carry the gesture further.

But let's take a closer look at what this gesture is about. These two people are ready to be seen, but they don't want to be seen in the way they perhaps tend to be seen. The image captures a protest gesture performed by the universal teenager. The gesture is universal in so far as it could have been performed just as easily by an Austrian kid. Something in the markers reveals those teenagers to be different in appearance from the average Austrian kid. But those markers of difference are not essential, they're accessories of a fundamental sameness, accessories that shine forth in the image as exhibition.

[New image] What this photograph is showing in terms of exhibition value is easy to decipher. Exhibition value is assumed by two girls, one of them my daughter. We learn from this image that assuming exhibition value means two things. First, it means to be aware of how you actually look. Second, it means to solicit an affirmative look by others; in this case, myself. In a way, the two girls don't need the image. But they need the image to be taken; they need my agency taking the snapshot as a confirmation of their appearance. There is no exhibition without an address. Things become more complicated but in a way also clearer if this address is not simply directed towards someone (me, the photographer) or something (the lens, the apparatus), but if the address is reflexively turned inward; if you are addressing yourself precisely by addressing someone else. To put it differently, exhibition value is not directed towards one side, but fundamentally reciprocal, at least as long as it is bound up with subjectivity – and bound up with subjectivity it is. There's no aesthetic experience without subjectivity. While good art in particular suggests the way it wants to be looked at, it is much harder to realise that art is also looking at itself, at least if the exhibition is considered to be a medium in its own right. A medium that implicates, involves and mobilises its subject.

## Questions and comments following Roger M. Buerger

Comment: Although the public for Documenta 1 had been tremendously hurt by the war, and were arguably less sophisticated than today's public, what they were shown was high quality art, which had previously been forbidden in Germany. I think this is an issue that we have so far by-passed. What counts in a show is first and foremost the quality of the art, however subjective the term quality may be, whether it is exhibited on a plastic sheet or on a wall in MOMA. Secondly, for me it is a great event that this morning the *Tucumán arde* is being used as an example of what art can mean. However, what has not been taken into account was that it was just the aftermath of May 1968 and remained very much within the scope of the Paris events. It provoked interest and debate, but it led to the idea that the only way to combat these injustices was violence and it cost us 30,000 dead. This is never mentioned by those who study *Tucumán arde*.

Audience: Are there any conceptual and methodological differences between an exhibition in a museum and the different exhibitions that take place in society as a whole? How can museums differentiate between what *they* do and what is done by large exhibitions such as Documenta? What is the level of information and knowledge that should be given in terms of mediation? In an exhibition like *Tucumán arde* there are diagrams which are only intelligible in Spanish – how does the museum/exhibition deal with the translation of that?

RB: To answer the last question first, the point is not to translate those diagrams or give a huge text to explain everything. This research has to be done also, but first you have to create a space of resonances where people can see what the aesthetic and psychic impact of the diagram was. So you have to relate it to other practices which try to find a way of conveying information by taking into account how information is formatted. Then they realised what is at risk when someone is doing a diagram like this: not a political risk, but what it means to come to terms with something like that. Then I think you start to have an interest in the story behind it and become motivated to go into this kind of education process. What an exhibition has to do is create an impression that this particular piece is all-important. That if you can read it then it will change your life. And when you can create this impression and get people to identify with that practice, then you help them into the realm of knowledge. Then they will start to inform themselves, but at that point you can safely leave them alone.

I care for museums and am deeply worried when museums are doing exhibitions. I think what museums should do is to take care of their collection. Wasting resources by doing one exhibition after another seems quite stupid. What has to be done in the museum is to relate the collection. What you have as a local museum in terms of your local situation and heritage, and what's going on, planetary scale; to mediate between those two entities and get the dynamics of this kind of translation right. This is something museums have to do! This requires a lot of art historical research and a lot of education. This is the big difference between museum practice and an exhibition that is always a very fragile and precarious structure.

Panel Discussion II: Zdenka Badovinac, Lynne Cooke, Vasif Kortun. Moderator: Robert Fleck

### **Marjetica Potrč - Andreja Kulunčić**

Zdenka Badovinac

This autumn, when I was working on my last exhibition, *Democracies*, which was one of the five exhibitions staged in the context of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tirana Biennale, I saw the question of the curatorial method in a new and special light.

I had invited some artists who typically put a lot of effort into the formal details of their installations. Everything these artists do usually looks perfectly executed. At the same time their works are about a profound involvement in the questions of the social context, in the issues that address people from the margins of the society. At times it was very difficult for the local organisers to fulfil all the artists' wishes regarding the details and the perfection of the appearance of their works, especially when this entailed spending considerable sums of money. All the requests the artists had were absolutely justified; they were only concerned the work, its quality and appearance. Nevertheless, there were moments when I felt, as a curator, a little uncomfortable and torn between my professional obligations towards the artists and my considerations for the conditions in one of the poorest countries in Europe.

This situation made me think long and hard about the methods and the standards of curatorial work. Is it right that we follow the same standards everywhere? To what extent do the different conditions of production and perception of an artwork influence not just our understanding of art, but the staging of exhibitions in general? As soon as we start talking about common standards or common methods, we should ask ourselves whose standards and methods they really are.

The necessity to create common standards has an economical and political background, and it divides the world between those who can follow the rules and those who cannot, or at least not as efficiently. Following the logic of standards it would be possible to create, for example, a new Europe, a Europe of exhibition standards, and add it to the diversity of the already existing Europe: to the European Union, the Schengen Europe, the tax Europe, the membership Europe, and the NATO Europe; Albania, however, is a part of the as yet unstandardised Europe.

For the exhibition *Democracies* in Tirana, the Slovenian artist Marjetica Potrč produced a video animation *Population Movements: the Albania Case Study*, in which she presented different migration processes, depending on the type of Europe in which people live. Western European cities are currently experiencing a migration of residents from urban to rural areas. Urban villages have become a desirable destination for streetwise urbanites who want to have the best of both worlds. In her video, Potrč presents the situation in Albania, which has experienced, in the 15 years since the collapse of the communist regime, an explosion in the movement of people from villages to cities, as well as a mass exodus from the country. As a result, sections of the beautiful rural landscape have been cleared, allowing new colonies to develop.

The exhibition *Democracies* presented art that took into account what is usually considered a characteristic of the Other that has to be changed, or better, modernised. *Democracies* focused on parallel economies, parallel tools of operations, and parallel urbanism and architecture, which are seen as taboos within the standardised protocols of the (post) modern world. Thus in her work *Tirana – a parallel system of social existence*, the Croatian artist Andreja Kulunčić collaborated with young artists. They

took her to parts of the city on which they wanted to focus their view and which represent a parallel system in Tirana's society. In this 'case study' they articulated the questions: why are these cases parallel systems to the existing ones?; which are the existing systems?; how can we draw a line between the two?; and, how can we approach this as an art piece?

In a way, the piece became a workshop with young artists about their view on a shifting democracy in Tirana. For the exhibition they made posters of the different locations in the city, featuring (1) an illegally built part of the city, where most of the men work illegally in Italy and the people live according to the old customs and the kanun laws; (2) folk healers who use traditional healing methods, such as medicinal herbs and leeches; (3) the illegal cigarette market, where young boys sell illegal cigarettes (of a better quality and more expensive than the ones made for the Albanian market) without the state stamp on them.

In most post-communist countries, which have yet to become equal partners in the global capitalist world, different informal systems can be found that are publicly judged as something wild, as a societal disease, but are secretly supported by the governments as the only way of preserving social peace. What is not socially recognised is the individual creativity of people, often more stimulated by the parallel systems than by the official ones. The artists in the exhibition proposed parallel systems as a serious experience to be included in the discussions about a better quality of life outside the dictates of capital and the standardised world.

The developed world tends to see the informal parallel systems as being stuck in the past in some way, as a part of pre-modern world, of pre-modernity in the sense of the spontaneous and uncontrolled participation of the individual, occurring through channels not regulated by the system in power. People operate in some kind of temporary autonomous zones, which are today often described with the pre-modern characteristics that are not just related to poor countries, but to the most advanced world of the media as well. 'The history of media is the history of piracy.' (Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture: How Big Media Uses Technology and the Law to Lock Down Culture and Control Creativity*, New York: Penguin Press, 2004)

There has been a long history of relations between the official and the parallel aesthetics, which deserves more serious attention, even its own history. The question of a parallel aesthetics depends on the contexts. There are many different parallel aesthetics in folk art, in the art of different marginal groups, in popular art, and in unofficial art which is parallel to the ideological art—there was a lot of such unofficial art in the Eastern European countries. Generally speaking, one of the features of Eastern European avant-garde is an inclination toward self-historiography, especially in terms of collecting and documenting various records of activities. In the absence of art institutions, which would systematise art history, neo-avant-garde artists were, for the most part, their own historians and archivists. They set up their own parallel museums.

Even today many contemporary artists in Eastern Europe still produce works that can serve as real archives or records and interpretations of their art and cultural histories.

For the Tirana exhibition I also invited the Russian artist Vladimir Arkhipov, who has been working on a serial project entitled the Folk Museum of Do-It-Yourself Objects. For his installation he collected different objects people in Tirana had designed for their own practical purposes, to use in their homes. For example, a wooden construction built by a man to mark and keep the spot where he normally parks his car. Arkhipov is basically interested in objects that are not subject to any formal aesthetic system. He made a video that included interviews with all the people who'd lent him their objects

for the exhibition. What I found especially interesting in that video was that he asked all the owners the same question: what they called the individual objects, which were their own, small inventions. Most of them hadn't given the objects any name. Due to their uniqueness, the objects stayed without generic names. If the people had thought about the objects in terms of any particular aesthetics, they would have probably named them following their unique content or function, similarly as works of art.

In the exhibition room, the objects were raised onto white pedestals, like sculptures, but the video with the interviews, which formed part of the installation, preserved the tension between their different functions – the ones from the gallery display and the ones from their everyday life. Arkhipov's work can serve as an example in our thinking about the methods of curatorial work.

Museums, exhibitions, biennials are products of Western modernity, that's why they modernise everything they present. As an example of this modernisation I would like to mention the vogue for staging extensive exhibitions of Balkan art. When discussing the question whether the differences between local and traditional cuisines were slowly disappearing, the famous Spanish chef Ferran Adrià once said that what made us different was, in a nutshell, the absence of progress. A precondition of progress is placing the local or traditional culture in a modern context, which can standardise some of its features to make it more comprehensible and accessible for a large market and for communication networks. European farmers, aficionados of traditional cuisines, etc., struggle to prevent the bureaucratic Europe from destroying their local particularities. But regardless of how traditional their particular Otherness is, it is nevertheless compatible with the modern world, since it contributes crucially to its enlightened and democratic character and enriches, with its colourfulness, what advanced capitalism has to offer. What the big Balkan exhibitions presented was art that in the context of these exhibitions lost its function and its real frame; it was served as a local dish.

Presenting the art of marginalised spaces in a big exhibition supports the power of this very Western model; it makes the Otherness of the art of marginalised spaces passive. By exhibiting the parallel systems, I wanted to emphasise the power of the active Otherness.

After more than a decade of large exhibitions in peripheral countries, the question arises whether we realise to what extent the experience with projects outside the world of western standards has influenced our curatorial methods.

Are the modern standards and methods of staging exhibitions just one of the tools of modernisation? Modernisation is a condition of progress for marginalised cultures and at same time, paradoxically, it enables forms of new imperialism to develop. Peripheral cultures must become modernised before they can cease to be victims of global capital and of the ecological destruction brought in the wake of globalisation. At the same time the modernisation of art space in the periphery can create a false picture of this art being part of the same system, the same conditions of production, perception and distribution as in the West. That's why it is important to keep the idea of the parallel systems open, to finally integrate modernity without canonising a degree of deviation from the formal systems.

Lynne Cooke

I will talk about a recent performance that I commissioned for Dia, but I will preface this by saying that I work in a very particular situation. Dia is a singular institution with a highly specialized focus in that it has a collection that represents work from one generation of artists only, and half of those artists were collected at the moment when Dia originated as a private foundation. The collection includes such artists as Judd, Darboven, and Kawara. At the moment the exhibition facility in Chelsea is closed after fifteen years of ongoing programming of single artist exhibitions. The artists whose work we commissioned and showed range from that founding generation to a much younger one, including Douglas Gordon and Tracey Moffat.

The activities I am currently involved with at Dia have to do with the new Dia:Beacon building that opened a couple of years ago in a small town 65 miles north of NYC on the Hudson River for the collection. The principle when installing each artist's holdings was to make spaces – galleries – that were tailored specifically to the individual requirements of each artwork and to allow the work by each artist to be seen in and for itself, in that there were no spaces that had mixed presentations. In addition, there were some artists in the collection whose work because of its character cannot be shown there, for the present at least, as in the case of Robert Irwin's installation piece, *Homage to the Square*.

We had commissioned a performance from Joan Jonas in 2001, but didn't have the funds or logistical support to realise it at the time of the opening: however, she began working on it and filmed in the building prior to its renovation. In fall 2005, the performance was realised in the basement gallery at Dia:Beacon where we built bleachers (seating space). The performance was devised specifically in relation to the space. It took place twice each weekend over three weekends. It was something that evolved slowly from conversations over several years: it grew by workshopping it in rehearsals, a process that is typical of the way Joan works. For example, Jose Blondet, who runs Dia's education programme initially offered to help move props during the performance. He eventually turned out to be the principal protagonist, taking the role of Aby Warburg, around which the whole piece is built.

Although we advertised it through the normal art channels and also in the region through local newspapers and radio, it was very evident that the majority of the audience was made up of people from the art world. In a way, it wasn't surprising, given that Joan is more of an artist's artist than a household name; but it isn't typical of the audience that normally comes to the building, which breaks down into a third local, a third from NYC and a third national/international.

I was really struck by the difference between the form and structure of this quite familiar way of commissioning and realizing a performance project and that of two other projects, both of which I saw last week in NYC. I want to end by comparing the Jonas performance with those.

The first, called *Seven Easy Pieces*, was a series of pieces that Marina Abramovic had proposed to the Guggenheim: what she would do over six different evenings – from 5pm to midnight – would be to re-enact a historical performance. She began with a Bruce Nauman piece that didn't involve his body as agent, but rather a series of instructions: *Body Press*, a piece that's on exhibit at Dia:Beacon, where anyone can read the instructions and carry them out. Over the course of the week, she then recreated Vito Acconci's *Seedbed*; a piece by Gina Pane; another by Valie Export;

Joseph Beuys's *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*; one her own, older performances; and on the seventh night, a new work.

Although it was a well-advertised set of events, it was evident that the Guggenheim had only expected a modest attendance each night. By the third evening there were at least one thousand people. The night she re-enacted her own performance, because of the danger and drama involved, there was a lot of tension. On the last night she was billed as giving a new performance.

Abramovic performed the series on a stage in the rotunda in the centre of the Guggenheim. So the circumstances in which she presented some of these pieces, like the *Valie Export*, were totally different from their original incarnations. And there's been a great deal of debate and discussion about whether, and if so, how these can be re-enacted, what does it mean... but I'll leave that aside for the moment.

On the last night when people came with the expectation of witnessing a new performance, Marina was on the stage, but now dressed in a gown that covered the whole stage and for seven hours she simply turned back and forth, raising her arms occasionally, as if to embrace the audience. By this time the audience was huge, including students who were camping out with their bags and books and blankets. It was fascinating to see how, that instead of permitting the spectators to observe her doing something, she'd turned it back to front, she'd opened it out into an event that was about engaging *them* as *her* subject, and their expectations that she was a cult figure, a celebrity.

(For further discussion, see *Joan Jonas, The Shape, The Scent, the Feel of Things*. New York: Dia Art Foundation; Paris and New York: Yvon Lambert, 2006.)

The second event took place at Orchard, which is a small gallery that opened in the Lower East Side two years ago, that is run by a collective, that includes artists such as Andrea Fraser and Louise Lawler, art historian Rhea Anastas, Rebecca Quaytman, and others. It's a very small shop front on the street. The first exhibition was of work donated by artists and their friends, with invitations going out via internet mailings: so, to a very knowledgeable, specialized audience.

The event to which I am referring was to be a screening of a film Michael Asher showed in the early seventies in Boston, in a dormitory room in a college: it was supposedly watched by an audience of four students. The film stock is clear – there's nothing on the film. It's a well-known, if little seen work. Yet, some seventy-five people crammed into this tiny space in order to watch this. I'm very interested in this phenomenon, because I assume that all seventy-five people knew exactly what they were going to see. So, why would they go to see this? Were they actually going to *it*, or to be a part of something? And what's the nature of what they are participating in? I suspect the nature of this is not about knowledge... I think it's much more nostalgic; that is, it has to do with engaging or entering into some form of collective memory. Equally telling is the fact that there is a notion of 'event' that is the vehicle by which one might insert oneself back into kind of collective memory. Albeit in different terms, I see this operating somewhat analogically to what Marina was beginning to activate in the remaking of historical performances culminating in a new performance that is self-reflexive.

The transformation of exhibitions, performances, screenings and the like into *events* is very characteristic of the moment we are living in. All these works – the Jonas performance, the Abramovic performances, and the Michael Asher screening – were realized by artists from one generation or with a certain conceptual interrelationship. I

was interested to hear Roger Buergel say that he thought museums should be looking after their collections and that exhibitions should be made elsewhere, presumably by other curators. I think it is the work made by the significant artists of the present that helps us to re-read and re-examine the art of the past – that the art of the past lives in large part through what the artists of the present are doing, and it's therefore important that this happens in institutions, for only in this way will the collections to be cared for and remain vivid and continuously relevant.

[For a response to this from Roger Buergel see Q&A section – Ed.]

*Vasif Kortun*

In 1991 I was here, in São Paulo, for a conference, organised by Mary Jane Jacob and Ivo Mesquita. The conference made me feel strong about what I was doing. I did know anyone at the conference but ended up meeting many people most of whom have remained valuable colleagues. It was one of the first instances when empowerment and liability --and this is something I'll come back to-- of what Roger described as unbelonging, and for me the notion double-exile became clear to me. You're exiled both from the centre[s] and home. Specifically, because the processes of contemporary art are such that they produce a radical tension with local existing cultural contexts and power structures. The fine disregard of the centres of that time exasperated the situation even more. You are either exiled from a place that your belonging would not be acknowledged, or from another place that your belonging would not be accepted. So, at the 1991 conference I found a mobile, itinerant community that informed my context specifically. Also, I am very happy to be here with Roger, because when he was elected for Documenta, people were asking, 'Roger?' I was lucky to see back in 2000 his exhibition at the Moscow Art Fair that stood distinct and precise from all the "stuff" around it. His exhibition, literally came out of a presentation portfolio, one of the most remarkable things I'd seen in a long time. Just now, Roger was talking about the notion of canon: A canon or canons is the last thing we need at this moment.

Just to go back to Brian Holmes's ideas of the 2%, the global one thousand, and the organic intellectuals... it strikes me as important, although I do not know how to generalize on that. The 'us', the itinerant curators, the new professionals who came into the field in the nineties are privileged subjects of the new liberal economy. However, this privilege doesn't go a long way, since it does not come with social benefits. It's a fragile and competitive condition, and if you cannot keep yourself in the radar by being a "project junkie," the likelihood of the next project is slim.

If there is a problem of ethics in the museum field at the moment it is because the diminishing and fragmented public sphere is reengineered by private, corporate interests, PR management, and urban strategists.

About the public sphere. I don't want to talk about my projects so much, but I run this place, Platform Garanti that is not a 2% institution. Firstly it's a public space. Unlike the white cube legacy, it is not an architecture which lack an outside, not in a sanitised zone, neither from inside nor the outside. It's in a pedestrian area but it is not immune from demonstrations, street fights, riots, etc., so not a Europeanised detrafficked shopping precinct per se. Secondly, unlike all other institutions in the city where I come from we don't have metal detectors at the gates, no CCTV, and no uniforms for gallery workers. I want to emphasise that because we felt compelled to offset the alienating immediacy of Cultural in capital letters. As a result, we became the best-attended place in the city: with nearly 100,000 people a year, with many people not actually knowing or worrying about what kind of space they are in.

Functioning in a de-sanitised zone arrives with its own problematics. I was listening to Ursula Bieman's presentation about the Black Sea project. We were insufficient hosts to her about a year ago when she was pursuing research on the project, and I would eventually like to host it. But I am at the same time apprehensive about the political ramifications. That is a very interesting moment in which you navigate an institution which is not protected by the classical immunity and impotency provided to institutions of culture. We already have two court cases from the previous biennials in Istanbul. I was comparing it to the Kunstwerke, where Anselm Franke works – KW versus

Platform. By virtue of its location, Platform is an extremely public space institution. Between the street and the exhibition space there are almost no passages of re-climatization. Whereas, when you enter KW, with its remarkable programming in the recent past, we know that it is for the cognoscente. Not that there's anything wrong with either situation, but the repercussions of working with contested territories are very different from those of the Kunstwerke in Berlin.

Many institutions, especially in the United States and Central Europe, are in crisis. And they can't quite resolve this crisis from within their own structures, their own staff. So, independent professionals are brought in as advisors to review programs, think through the problems, speak to the institutional curators, and so on. The conditions of hospitality are however not met in that the advisory does not reflect upon results. It is both advise without responsibility and vice versa. Whereas there could be other models where institutions can provide cohabitation and unconditional hospitality by turning over their programs to the guest.

I ran an institution at Bard between 1994 and 97: the Center for Curatorial Studies Museum. In retrospect, I came to realise what I'd done, which I was not so self-conscious of at the time. We had the first retrospective of an artist from Brazil, "Tunga" curated by Carlos Basualdo, Before that, Joshua Decker was invited to curate "A/drift," a seminal project on youth cultures and art. This was a complex project no institution dared to receive in the States. The third project was going to be curated by Uta Meta Bauer the prime motivation was to interface with the Bard campus. I preferred to work with guest curators and offer them full service. The conditions of the exhibition should surpass the conditions of the museum.

There are moments when you have to invert the logic of the guest curator or advisor. And that has to do with the notion of hospitality. At the end of the day, the host may have to leave the house, because unconditional hospitality has to do with allowing the guest to happen. This happened in a very remarkable way in "Mining the Museum" project back in 1993. The artist, and Fred Wilson took over director's office of the Baltimore Historical Society.

We executed a test in 2004 at Platform where we invited a comparable institution to us from Amsterdam take over our institution [Smart Project Space] for six weeks; we invited a German-based Danish artists' initiative [Sparwasser HQ] to take over for a month and a half. It actually worked!

Thank you.

**Questions following the Panel Discussion II: Zdenka Badovinac, Vasif Kortun, Lynne Cooke, Roger M. Buergel. Moderator: Robert Fleck**

Lynne Cooke: Roger said that he thought museums should be looking after their collections and that exhibitions should be made elsewhere. I think it is artists of the present that help us to re-read the art of the past and it's important that this happens in institutions with collections.

Roger Buergel: This is misunderstanding. The point I was making is that what I desire from a museum is to work productively on its collection and to make exhibitions which relate to that collection. But not making exhibitions of artists from the top list, who have no connection to the collection. That was my point.

Robert Fleck: Roger, you said you were very interested in education and that this implies the notion of canon. As Vasif and Zdenka have questioned the idea of canon, perhaps you could explain your position a little more.

RB: I am completely aware of the political charge behind the concept of canon. On the other hand, education only makes sense if we have a clear understanding of where we start and what we are going to mediate. I think that the notion of canon could be reworked. It wouldn't mean of course having a couple of art works, the privileging of certain geo-political regions, etc. Canon can be turned into a loose category where you focus on the migration of form. By that I mean that it is not necessary to tie specific practices or outputs once and for all to a particular region. You can actually see, following up artists who have migrated, how certain kinds of interaction are happening and being taken up in other cultural fields. This could help us to access the aesthetic in a different way – a way beyond identity and difference.

RB: I have a question for Zdenka. How do you justify your initial statement that modernity is not integrated in the post-Soviet countries?

Zdenka Badovinac: The Eastern countries were often treated as countries without their own modernity: the answer would be that communism was our modernity. My use of the word modernity is more in terms of standards. I think that standards are very important elements of modernity in a Western sense. What we have to integrate to become equal partners in global exchange is exactly this Western modernity, in terms of standardisation, which I've tried to problematise, of course, because it is double edged.

Audience: Does the *Tucumán arde* exhibition make sense out of context?

RB: It's true, by re-presenting this work I am taking it out of its context. But I think it's right to do that, but not without being responsible towards the piece. I would not be able to do that if I didn't have a deep level of affection for the work and the artists. When we installed the archive it was the most context-less way to present the material. I think it is correct to take things out of their context if you are capable of putting them into a new context in which the experience makes sense. It wouldn't do justice to the work if you limit it to a certain notion of origin and leave it there. But it makes sense if you show the piece and show how it helps you to make an exhibition. Like the exhibition on government [*How do we want to be governed*, MACBA, various venues, Barcelona 2004 – ed.] in which context this piece was presented. We had a context there where artists make an exhibition and turning the exhibition into an artistic medium became perfectly understandable.

Audience: You said you look for a correspondence between aesthetic forms and forms of being, but surely that's the basis of the idea of aesthetics anyway. Can you elaborate?

RB: By forms of being, I mean subjectivity: the way we are organised as individuals, or as a community, is not given. It is something conceived, something that we elaborate, but it is also something we come with. There are political and social factors that determine the shape of our subjectivity. What happens in aesthetic experience is that some of those relations we are in, of which we may not be aware, can be contemplated. When we enter an aesthetic experience we have the possibility, if we are willing, to look at ourselves looking. This is a whole bodily experience. Walking through an exhibition has an impact on our way of relating with the world. In art, those categories we normally live with are suspended in this kind of experience, so we have a chance to work on our selves in a transformative way.

LC: You mentioned that museums are in crisis: can you elaborate? Secondly, you did make a distinction between what you valued as an exhibition and how you determined an exhibition derived from a collection. You mentioned the opportunity for scholarship in connection with the display of the collection; the question is, is there not also the opportunity for scholarship in connection with exhibitions? I don't see them as particularly different models. Thirdly, your description of the conditions of viewing within the first Documenta, which is really what you were describing, whether an ontological or phenomenological presentation... surely all you were describing was any good curator's ability to put together a thematic exhibition? I don't see that what you are presenting as a radical alternative is any different from what any good exhibition does already.

RB: When was I talking about a radical alternative?

LC: Without using the word radical, in your presentation you were inferring that this was indeed a change, a move away from existing exhibition norms.

RB: No, I think this is a fantasy. I was not talking about the museum being in a crisis. I was mainly interested in two things. One was how we relate the local and the global methodologically in an exhibition – how that could be done without fixing the local or leaving the global unconnected. The other thing that I wanted to emphasise was the 'medium' quality that an exhibition has. Of course, there are many exhibitions and museum presentations that are brilliant in doing that. I wouldn't capitalise on any kind of radical alternative. I wanted to go back to basics and emphasise the potential an exhibition has in order to relate art to its audience. With Documenta you have a lot of people – 650,000 – and it is obvious that the art world are in the minority: they don't matter. You have to find ways to educate yourself if you don't want to be a part of this international curators' network, which is exchanging always the same artists. So how do you access local knowledge when you are coming from Europe to Colombo or Hong Kong or Dakar? We have come up with a way to do that.

Vasif Kortun: In terms of museums in crisis, one thing is obvious and that is the loss of mission. Especially in Central Europe, where there are so many migrant communities, and yet there's hardly anything for these new Europeans in European museums. That is a crisis in terms of the narratives you construct: those narratives are actually racist. Every collection presents a point of origin but also at any given second it's contemporary. Also, the narrative of the history of the work in that collection speaks to the changing ideology of the museum, which has to be reorganised.

## Museums in the Colonial Horizon of Modernity

Walter Mignolo

I will argue that Museums in the modern/colonial world (that is, the way of life, economic principles, political structures and models of subjectivities that originated in the sixteenth century with the emergence of the Atlantic commercial circuits) had and still have a particular role to play in the colonization of knowledge and of beings. The question then is how to de-colonize the museum. And what a de-colonial option that will orient the work museums can do (e.g. in a nutshell, reproducing the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality or entering in a face of *epistemic and aesthetic disobedience* undoing what museums did in modern/imperial history: learning to unlearn and to enact museums for de-colonization of being and of knowledge).

### 1. Epistemic and aesthetic disobedience: On modernity/coloniality and the de-colonial option

Regarding the colonization of knowledge, just remember that at the same time that Europe accumulated money through the extraction of gold and silver in the sixteenth century, and through the exploitation of the Caribbean plantations and the massive slave trade in the seventeenth century, Europe also accumulated *meaning*. Museums and universities were and continue to be two crucial institutions for the accumulation of meaning and the reproduction of the coloniality of knowledge and of beings. By this I mean a certain ideal of the subject of subjectivity than, in its extreme manifestations, you can see today in television, the marketing and advertising in the NYT magazine or in any equivalent magazine or any major newspaper in the world. There is a horizon of expectations driven by the will to possess (cars, watches, brand-name clothing, you name it) and be thin, have a certain figure, lose weight, not to think about yourself except in terms of being successful; and being successful means to buy a certain kind of watch and car, certain clothing and responding to a certain look. In a nutshell, to be according to how you would like to be seen in a market-driven society. That is what I mean by colonization of being. Slavery in the sixteenth century was another form of colonizing beings, and is still in force today on a global scale.

One of the tasks before us is to engage in de-colonial projects, learning to unlearn the principles that justified Museums and Universities, and to formulate a new horizon of understanding and of Human living conditions beyond the sacred belief that accumulation is the secret for a decent life. Now, once we analytically unveil the colonizing roles of the Museum, what is next? De-colonization, of course, and de-colonization of the Museum shall take place both in scholarship and in Museum exhibits and performances. How can museums contribute to the de-colonization of knowledge, being as they are in a milieu where the media is in a full colonizing mode (with the exception of independent media), and where universities are becoming more and more corporate, losing the space for critical and de-colonizing thinking?

I will flesh out some of these ideas by looking at *Mining the Museum* as an exemplary case of a de-colonizing perspective, and my own argument will, on the one hand, support the exhibit and, on the other, continue its work in the domain of scholarship. *Mining the Museum* is indeed an exemplar of epistemic and aesthetic disobedience.

I want to bring forward, in this talk, the parallels and complicities between the accumulation of money and the accumulation of meaning in the modern/colonial world. The Museum, as a Western institution, is a paradigmatic example of such a

confluence. 'Accumulation of money' is a metaphor for capitalism, and 'accumulation of meaning' is a metaphor for Western cosmology since the Renaissance, built upon Greek and Latin languages and categories of thoughts.

Please keep in mind these three expressions: coloniality of power, coloniality of knowledge and coloniality of being. I will go through some specific cases first and return thereafter to these three expressions and to the main thrust of my argument.

## II. Museums, Accumulation of Meaning and Accumulation of Money

Let's start with the definition of the word. By the year 1615 it was defined as:

Museum: 1615, 'the university building in Alexandria,' from L. *museum* 'library, study,' from Gk. *mouseion* 'place of study, library or museum,' originally 'a seat or shrine of the Muses,' from *Mousa* 'Muse.' Earliest use in ref. to Eng. institutions was of libraries (e.g. the British Museum); sense of 'building to display objects' first recorded 1683 (Online Etymology Dictionary). *Museum* in the Western world is closely related to University.

The institution we call today the University began to take shape in Bologna at the end of the eleventh century, when masters of Grammar, Rhetoric and Logic began to devote themselves to the law.

But, as everything else, museums and universities, as institutions of learning, were caught up in the radical changes of the sixteenth century. What changes were those? Simply put, the re-organization of Western Europe (from Italy to the Iberian Peninsula and from France and Germany to Britain, going through Holland). These are the places where the idea of Europe as Western Civilization was invented. Museums and universities quickly entered into the sphere of capitalism—as we know it today. The rhetoric of modernity (the triumphal march of history toward a better future for humanity) conceived of museums as an accumulation of meaning, very much like encyclopedias. However, because museums emerged during the Renaissance, they have been also linked to the logic of coloniality (the need to convert and civilize the inhabitants of the planet that were still out of history, the barbarians and primitives). Consequently, museums followed two complementary directions in the accumulation of meaning: one type of museum documented and consolidated the genealogy of European history. Art museums were and still are the epitome of this direction. The second type was the ethnographic and natural museum, which documented 'other cultures', including their art. As for the University, since this is not our topic today, let's just mention that the European University that saw its beginnings in Bologna was followed by similar institutions in Salamanca and then in Coimbra; and, in the sixteenth century, the Universidad de Santo Domingo, the Universidad de Mexico, the Universidad de Lima and the Universidad de Córdoba, Argentina, were created. In 1636, Harvard University was founded. All of these universities were at once modern and colonial—modern because they were the pillars in the very self-definition of modernity; and colonial because they became a crucial institution for the coloniality of knowledge and of being. Sophisticated learning institutions among the Aztecs, Maya and Incas were disavowed and eroded and replaced by a Western system of education. In Santo Domingo, with the indigenous population wiped out, the university became an institution for the education of Creoles of Spanish descent and, occasionally, of Mestizos. The Museum was not an institution in the colonies but, rather, in the metropolis.

It was in the metropolis that a new kind of museum emerged. Frantz Boaz described it as the ethnographic museum. That is, museums began to be divided into two large types: the Museums that contributed to building the internal history and identity of Europe (from Greek and Roman antiquities to painting and other artifacts); and those that focused on the external history of Europe: that of the colonies and that of the strangers, like the Chinese, who were never colonized but whose history was not part of the history of Europe. Boa's ethnographic museum is indeed the most striking example of the radical changes in the accumulation of meaning of the sixteenth century as Europe capitalized on both: the meaning of its internal history and the meaning of the histories of the Other(s). There is an interesting overlap between Ethnographic and Natural History Museums. Let's take the example of The Field Museum in Chicago.

The Field Museum was incorporated on 16 September 1893 – one year after the four-hundred-year celebration of the discovery of America – as 'The Columbian Museum of Chicago'. Its purpose, the literature of the Museum tells us, was 'the accumulation and dissemination of knowledge and the preservation and exhibit of objects illustrating art, archaeology, science and history'. In 1905, the name was changed to the 'Field Museum of Natural History'. The reason for the change, also stated in the literature of the Museum, was 'to honor the Museum's first major benefactor, Marshall Field, and to better reflect its focus on the natural sciences'. In 1921 the Museum moved from its original location in Jackson Park to its present site on Chicago Park District property near downtown, where it is part of a lakefront Museum Campus that includes the John G. Shedd Aquarium and the Adler Planetarium.

These three institutions are regarded as among the finest of their kind in the world and together attract more visits annually than any comparable site in Chicago. And the Field Museum is also a place of observation, where Ethnographic and Natural History objects go under the microscope.



Thus, in a very natural narrative the reader has been taken from a Museum that celebrated Columbus' discovery with art, archeology, science and history, to Natural History. Furthermore, the Museum was moved next to the lakefront to be in good Natural History company: the Aquarium and the Planetarium. When, instead, we look at the literature of the Art Institute of Chicago, we find images like this one:



That is, nothing to do with Ethnography and Natural History but, instead, with Art and Civilization.

### III. The Role of Museums in a Corporate Oriented World and the De-colonial Option.

When Fred Wilson did an installation at the Maryland Historical Society in 1992, he shook up the museum world. Co-sponsored by the historical society and the Contemporary Museum, *Mining the Museum* did not involve artwork made by the artist; rather, it involved reinstalling items from the historical society's collection in such a way as to make us reconsider them.



Cabinetmaking, 1992

In *Cabinetmaking* he exhibited a set of four wonderful antique chairs, most likely from the nineteenth century, belonging to Baltimore wealthy families. He arranged them as one can imagine they might have been arranged for a piano soirée during an evening in the spring. The imaginary guests of that soirée are elegantly seated on the chairs, as if they were facing an accomplished pianist, or perhaps a poet, from the distinguished elite of Washington, D.C. Instead, for their entertainment, Fred Wilson placed a whipping post, a gift to the Baltimore Historical Society, from the Baltimore City Jail Board.

For those of you not familiar with the exhibit, let me run a couple more examples before continuing and closing my argument.

Some of the most striking and most commented on scenarios along the lines of *Cabinetmaking* were in the vitrine labeled *Metalwork 1793-1880*. In this exhibit, he placed ornate silver goblets and pitchers alongside a pair of iron slave shackles.



Metalwork, 1793-1880

One particular room of the exhibit was titled *Modes of Transport, 1770-1910*. As you entered, what you saw was more or less this:



Modes of Transport, 1770-1910

Walking about in the room, looking at the details, you would have probably shivered (as I did) when you suddenly realized what the baby carriage was carrying:



*Modes of Transport, 1770-1910 (Detail)*

In fact, as soon as visitors walked out of the elevator onto the third floor where the exhibit was located, the impact was like a slap in the face. As you got out of the elevator, and just in front of you, you were confronted with this:



*Welcome to Mining the Museum; the reception hall.*

You may have recognized the faces or not, at the first glance, depending on your particular education. However, even if you did not recognize them (as I did not recognize Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson), what I saw was the larger picture, the horizon behind the pedestal and the 'torsos': the horizon was the Renaissance and the re-construction of Greek and Roman prominent founders of Western Civilization. And I knew without thinking that that horizon came to me from all the Museums I have seen, from my university years (I lived in a small town of 10,000 people until I went to the University and began to travel and visit Museums). As you can see in the picture, the pedestals on the right, with the 'torsos' are much shorter than the pedestal on the left,

which are empty. The effect was shocking, to see Napoleon so low that instead of looking at viewers at eye-level, it was necessary to look down, producing some strange sensations in your body and in your brain.

Approaching the empty pedestals on the left, probably at the height of around 5' 10", the viewer had to make an effort to read the inscription of the name on the top of the pedestal. I recognized the name in the middle, Frederick Douglas, as I had recognized the face in the middle of the busts on the right hand side, Napoleon. I did not recognize the other two names, Harriet Tubman and Benjamin Banniker, but, once again, the horizon was immediately heating your body and your brain: the silences, the absences – both created by the white Men on the right – and the discourses that justified and glorified the right Men on the right and made invisible the invisible 'torsos' of the pedestal on the left.

Most of the articles I read that justly praised Fred Wilson's achievements in this exhibit, as well as in his previous work, were enthusiastic comments but glossed over what, for me, is its most astute and powerful statement: a de-colonial statement in the heart of the Museum as an imperial/colonial (and of course national) institution.

Let me explain what I have in mind here, and let me soften the statement that the Museum is an imperial/colonial institution by adding that they are not only that. There are, of course, other functions that Museums, as houses of learning, have performed and perform. The future is open.

#### **IV. What is Fred Wilson up to?**

Holland Cotter published an article in the New York Times (30 April 2004) about Fred Wilson's exhibit *Objects and Installations, 1979-2000* at the Studio Museum in Harlem. Cotter gave the article a very suggestive title: 'Pumping Air into the Museum, so it is as Big as the World Outside.' To make sense of Wilson's work and to convince his readers of the importance of Wilson's work, Cotter goes where? To post-modernism. And, sensing that his audience may have a negative reaction to this, he begins with a disclaimer and then a description of post-modern novelties that he found helpful to interpret Wilson's exhibits—both at the Harlem museum, and the groundbreaking *Mining the Museum*, to which Cotter returns to in his article. Apologies for quoting Cotter at length, but it is very important to understanding the context of my point and to show Cotter's well-intentioned blindness. Cotter writes:

'Call it an attitude, a phase or a fad, but postmodernism did at least one good, big thing. It rained hard on the mostly white, mostly male, by-invitation-only party that had long been Western art.

It did so by asking pushy, deflating questions about beauty, quality, authority and who really owns what. It pegged as corrupt an aesthetic hierarchy shaped by a cozy alliance of market interests and critical – read personal – opinion. It told reigning tastemakers: sorry, but your best thinking is old, parochial, stale. It forced inside players to either look outside their suddenly uncharmed circle or be uncool. To me, post-modernism primarily meant that art and the world expanded, and connected. My white, middle-class, American credentials no longer put me at the center of the picture, but over there somewhere, among the many others over there. And this was fine, since Over There turned out to be the new Here. If such repositioning made sense to you, you were unlikely to look at art, or the art world, or museums, or yourself the same way again.

They made sense to the artist Fred Wilson, who is the subject of a traveling survey now at the Studio Museum in Harlem, and who played a significant role in defining a fresh critical perspective on art and its institutions.'

Well, you tell me: according to what you know or, if you did not know before, of the little you saw of Wilson's work in my presentation, is post-modernism a frame that explains what Wilson is up to? When was modernism attentive to coloniality and racism? Never, as far as I know and can imagine, because post-modernism, as its name indicates, is restricted to the histories and experiences of Western Europe and the U.S., as is its very foundation, modernity.

I will claim that Fred Wilson makes a radical contribution to de-colonial (not even post-colonial) thinking, but de-colonial thinking through and by way of the Museum. Let me unpack this.

On de-colonialism and post-colonialism first. Post-colonialism or coloniality was a consequence of post-modernism or post-modernity – the other or complementary side of post-modernity. It emerged in the North Atlantic, Paris, London and the U.S. And it emerged bringing together post-structuralism (Foucault, Lacan and Derrida) in conversation with Orientalism and post-partition India. Edward Said frames Orientalism as a form of colonization of knowledge, following Foucault's 'archeology of knowledge'. Hommi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak read post-partition India and its British colonial past through Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida, respectively. Thus, in that sense, post-colonialism was introduced mainly in the U.S. academy through post-structuralism and colonialism, after the post revealed, intentionally or not, the missing side of modernity (as in post-post-modernity and post-modernism).

De-coloniality is something else in many respects. First of all, as a concept it has de-colonization as its ancestor during the Cold War years, with the de-colonization of Asian and African countries. In Latin America, the term was adopted in the social sciences (Fals Borda), in philosophy (Dussel, philosophy of liberation) and in the theology of liberation. It was not a central concept, but it was there. And when it wasn't there, like in dependency theory, it was implied in the sense that if developing (Third World) economies cannot develop and modernize while they remain dependent of developed, industrial, First World economies, then the next step would be to de-link them, as Egyptian sociologist Samir Amin argued. De-linking is part of the grammar of de-colonization. But de-colonization here is no longer used in the sense that the native bourgeoisie of Third World countries used the term: sometimes it was used to reproduce internal colonialism, by taking in their own hands what imperial domination had done for several centuries. The term was re-defined in the late eighties and early nineties in relation to the unveiling of the colonial matrix of power: the underlying socio-economic, political, epistemic and subjective logic of coloniality that was hidden under the rhetoric of progress and modernity. De-coloniality means, then, de-coloniality of being and knowledge, of gender and sexuality, of authority (politics, the state) and the economy (land appropriation, exploitation of labor, financial legal extractions, etc.).

*Mining the Museum* is just that, a move toward the de-coloniality of being and of knowledge that, on the one hand reveals the underlying assumptions in the institution itself and, on the other hand, uses the institution to reveal what has been hidden in colonial histories of slavery and also the consequences of racism. An act of epistemic and aesthetic disobedience at its best. Let me read you a few statements made by Fred Wilson in a conversation with Leslie King-Hammond. Wilson made several very revealing observations, critical (statements about museums and artistic performances), as well as autobiographical. Let's go through some of them. King-Hammond asked him

what was the difference 'between feeling like an outsider in Europe, as opposed to your experiences as an outsider here in this country...'

'There I was feeling bad about myself because of how I was being treated, and meanwhile everybody's acting like there's no problem. In the museum, you're in this environment you're supposed to understand and you're supposed to feel good about. All of these 'supposed to's'— and the artwork's all there, but there's all this stuff that's not being talked about as it relates to the real world.' (p.29)

The 'the supposed to' is, as I have been arguing here and elsewhere, the rhetoric of modernity, the rhetoric of progress, of well being, of salvation, of democracy, of the beautiful and the sublime. It is a faith that allows for arguments such as 'moving forward' and hiding the reality of 'being left behind and outside'. Behind 'the supposed to', there is the logic of coloniality, 'the way it is' (the disavowal, the silence, the refusal, racialization as a structure of supremacy-subalternity, exploitation and oppression at all levels). Keep in mind that the first step of de-colonization is precisely to unveil and then undo – and do something else – the rhetoric of modernity as the 'supposed to' hiding the logic of coloniality, the way it is. 'Denial' is the word used by Wilson:

'All this denial, all this history of America, all this history of Europe, and the relationship between people is not being talked about. Museums just pretend that we can overlook it, that we can experience 'culture' without having those feelings of oppression. This compounds those feelings. That's why I like working in museums, because they're so much of America to me, unconsciously.' (p.29)

Oppression and denial are just two of the aspects of the logic of coloniality that operates at the level of being, of the coloniality of being – precisely what Wilson is expressing here. De-colonization of being is the direct consequence of the awareness, of the consciousness of being colonized. One of the enormous contributions of *Mining the Museum* is the contribution to the de-colonization of being. The other is to the de-colonization of knowledge. Let's see how the de-colonization of being and of knowledge go hand in hand.

Then comes, for Wilson, the experience of Africa (after growing up in the Bronx and visiting Europe). He was in Ghana, Nigeria, Gogo and Benin, in 1975. 'It was the perfect time, it was *the* time. It was totally different from everything I knew.' Remember, he was talking about America and Europe, about what he knew, about how his knowledge was naturalized, or colonized. In Africa, he realized that he was not seen as Black: 'They looked at me and said, 'you are not white, but you are not black either. And I was thinking,' Wilson continues, 'I have been suffering all this time and now you are telling me I am not black?' (p. 29) Both situations unveil the logic of coloniality of knowledge and of being. The first sentence makes visible a classification that is not natural, of course, but has been implanted by the hegemonic imperial knowledge. That is, the classification of people is not a natural outcome of the people themselves – neither a classification invented by Blacks or Indians – but is invented by those who had the power to classify and the control of knowledge. The second sentence by Wilson asserts a rejection of that classification and, in the act of rejection, an epistemology grounded on the geo- and bio-location of the 'knower' is at work. But Africa, Wilson recognizes, re-centered him: he knew there was another space that was not Europe and not America, and Blacks (as well as other denied and racialized people) lived in both of those places, particularly in America. It was Africa in this case, but it could have been any other place for any other non-white (as Wilson mentions in the paragraph below: Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans) heterosexuals, males and

dissenting females. It is that difference, the difference of 'Afro-America', the awareness of the coloniality knowledge and being that all came together in *Mining the Museum*:

'I was beginning to see a lot of African-American, Native American, Hispanic, and Asian artists dealing with their history and their cultural identity in their work. At the time there were a lot of European Americans that were doing work that referred to the Renaissance and to Western art history. I thought, well, wouldn't it be interesting to put this artwork in these different museum environments to see how they might be affected by the different settings? ... You could put them in the American Museum of Natural History and they would blend in. I said to myself, "What does that mean about what's happening in that museum? How can we think about the work of contemporary artists of color in the same way we think about an African's work, considering the way it's being presented?"' (p.31)

There are a couple of points in this paragraph I would like to highlight. First, the success of his exhibits alerted the Establishment, and Wilson was quickly accepted and recognized in the main circuits of art and museums. Then the McArthur Foundation selected him as one of its fellows in 1999. Which of course I think is excellent. When Wilson's work was invited to the Venice Biennale, in 2003, Judith E. Stein stated with appropriate emotion that:

'It is a rare honor to represent one's country at the Venice Biennale, one of the most prestigious venues in the world for showing contemporary art. This year the United States gave the nod to Fred Wilson, who addressed the visual history of Africans in Venice by assembling a group of old master Italian paintings and wooden figurines of blackamoors. The artist even hired a Senegalese tourist to dress up as a street vendor and stand in front of the US Pavilion, flogging knock-off "Prada" bags that Wilson designed.' (<http://Slought.org>, p.1)

It is indeed absolutely wonderful that Wilson received all this recognition. The problem, however, is that at this point there is no other alternative or another paradigm in which to cast Wilson's splendid achievements: the MacArthur Foundation and the Venice Biennale. So the de-colonial paradigm to which Wilson's work contributes is erased and his work is integrated into the imperial paradigm that he not only contests, but also de-links from. The problem we face now is that the de-colonial paradigm is a practice without institutions. The institutions still belong to the imperial/colonial paradigm. Thus, recognition is great at this point since it is better to be recognized than reduced to silence. But recognition should not make us forget that it is recognition in and from the imperial/colonial paradigm. We all know things have to change in order to remain the same, Lampedusa's well-known dictum. De-colonial thinking and practices (from philosophy to political theory, from performances and art exhibits to social movements) work toward another frame of mind, a frame of mind in which Wilson's main contribution is not its 'artistic achievements' according to *modern standards*, but its de-colonial thinking, revealing the imperial underpinning of artistic modern standards and the imperial foundations of Museums and the Venice Biennale.

Let's go back to Wilson's previous quotation when he was thinking of organising the same exhibit in different Museums, specifically the Frick, the Metropolitan, and the American Museum of Natural History (which return us back to the beginning of my presentation). Let me remind you of Wilson's words I just mentioned a few minutes ago: how would European Art look if you placed it in the American Museum of Natural History? 'How can we think,' Wilson asked, 'about the work of contemporary artists of

color in the same way we think about an African's work, considering the way it's being presented?' (pp. 31)

So, imagining Tintoretto and Rafael, El Greco and Picasso in the Museum of Natural History? There is a long history of the colonization of being and of knowledge that generated the illusion that African art looks very 'natural' in a Natural Museum; and the same would be in the case of Native American art. Imagine a Navajo sand painting in the permanent collection of the Institute of Contemporary Art in Chicago, or any of the examples analyzed by Lucy Lippard in her *Mixed Blessing: New Art in a Multicultural America* (2000). In art, as in different branches of knowledge, 'philosophy' and 'science' will be the words that monopolize knowledge and control and colonize whatever doesn't fit the standards of what the philosophical and scientific elite considers 'knowledge'. There is a strict correlation in the modern/colonial world between race and epistemology that extends from the color of human beings, to their supposed 'original' location on the planet (this notion of location comes together with certain languages and systems of beliefs that are controlled by the concept of 'religion' in the imperial West). That illusion, which is naturalized through education, is precisely the colonization of knowledge and of being.

Wilson responds that, in Europe, he did not feel bad for feeling like an outsider because he was supposed to be an outsider. But in America, he said, 'You are supposed to be part of this place and everyone is pretending that you are.' This feeling of disavowal and, at the same time, awareness of the bad faith (feeling and knowing among the white community that you are not the same and pretending you are) is better expressed in the following paragraph:

'The museum is like American society at large. I grew up in an environment where I was alienated, and yet perhaps better placed in the Museum of Natural History than in between Tintoretto and Rafael, mixed with El Greco and Picasso, even if these last two were "Hispanics".' (p. 28)

Hispanics, but marginal Castilians – El Greco was from Greece as the name indicates, and Picasso was from Malaga: Spanish but not Castilian. In a nutshell, Wilson is being recognized for something else, not for his dismantling of the imperial logic that is recognizing him. Thus, the need to construct narratives and conceptual frames that, while acknowledging Wilson's official recognition, brings him back to the terrain of his struggle: de-colonial thinking.

## **V. Fred Wilson's de-colonial shift.**

De-colonial shift is not just a change in content, but in the logic of conversation. It is epistemic and aesthetic disobedience. Wilson has been recognized for his 'revolutionary' content, while the recognition (by the MacArthur Foundation, by Venice Biennale and by progressive art critics) contributes to hide its really revolutionary motive. Wilson's *Pachakuti* – to use the Aymara expression – could be correlated with the invasion of Spanish troops and missionaries into the Andean region of the Inca Empire. From the perspective of the inhabitants of Tawantinsuyu, the world was suddenly turned around (turned upside down, to use Waman Puma de Ayala's expression). Wilson's work is contributing to a Pachakuti in reverse in the modern/colonial world, undermining the very principles of knowledge and beliefs on which modernity has been built, since the initial Pachakuti. He uses the Museum as a point of articulation. Others choose music; others scholarly research and arguments; still others articulate change through social movements, like Evo Morales in Bolivia. Thus, Wilson's work read in the de-colonial shift cannot be restricted to art histories

and Museums (where he is recognized and co-opted) but, enjoying his official recognition, it should be supported and re-mapped in the de-colonial turn: unveiling the logic of coloniality (at all levels, knowledge and subjectivity, and not only authority and economy) and opening up the gates to imagine possible futures detached from the mono-topic cosmology of the modern world.

Panel Discusión III: Ana Longoni, Ariel Jiménez, Gabriel Pérez Barreiro, Virginia Pérez-Rattón. Moderator: Moacir dos Anjos.

### **Inside? Outside? Where to?**

#### **Questions concerning the relationships between the avant-garde and artistic institutions**

*Ana Longoni*

As is well known, the Italian Futurists exalted proclamation to burn museums implied comprehension of the historic avant-gardes as antagonistic towards artistic institutions. This *anti-institutional* condition is crucial in the definition proposed by Peter Bürger in his founding *Theory of the Avant-garde* (1973).

Several voices have argued against this emphasis, insofar as it ignores the possibility of thinking about the many avant-garde movements that maintain strong ties with institutions and even founded them, when emerging in artistic fields where those institutions are lacking, particularly in South America; not to mention the Russian avant-garde during the early days of the Russian Revolution.

Taking this very parameter, Bürger and other theorists challenge the so-called neo-avant-gardes of the sixties as unauthentic, condemning them as inevitable fagocitation or failed useless replicas insofar as the historical avant-garde movements were a failure. They denounce the Art Institution's capacity for reinstating the iconoclast gesture and neutralising it as an permitted deviation. The neo-avant-gardes discredit lies in the absence of rupture and their (apparently pacific) integration in the new post-war institutional framework, propitiating modern contemporary art within the expanded territory where the anti-artistic gesture is contemplated as art.

I take this synthesis as a starting point, with which you are all familiar, to pose a series of questions to help us rethink the avant-gardes/museum tension not only through the twentieth-century history of art but above all in relation to current movements, which we might call post-avant-gardes.

Several authors have reservations with such a restricted definition. Adopting it would lead to the conclusion authentic avant-gardes did not exist outside Europe, nor would new avant-gardes be possible: thus the end of historical movements. Nevertheless, radical experiences existed in post-war art that questioned the existing order, the invention of an energy transforming the present, and the utopic reintegration of art into life.

A definition of avant-garde may be put forward as those moments of intensity where *the expansion of limits* occurs as to what might be considered art, even its *outbreak or breakthrough*. In this sense, for example if *Tucumán arde* may be confused with a political act, then effectively it was a political act. Those experiences where art becomes related to society, politics or the daily routines of men, not in external or autonomous terms, but rather from its *points of escape or reconnection*, attacking the lack of function or the restricted political nature of art in Modernity (i.e. politics in art being restricted to a question of language). They are experiences voting for a non-inherent critical condition and seeking the union of criticism with the binomials: ethics-aesthetics, political-poetical, art-utopia.

Researching the relationship between artistic and political avant-garde movements in Argentina in the sixties and seventies enabled me to approach the complex relationship that effectively existed among artists, works and the institutional modernising circuit,

unapproachable from the schema identifying avant-gardes as rupture and neo-avant-gardes as integration with the museum.

I don't believe, as might be deduced from the book *Del Di Tella a Tucumán Arde* (Buenos Aires, El Cielo por Asalto, 2000), that an initial 'cynical' period where the relationship between the artistic avant-gardes and the institutional modernising circuit was peaceful, and mutually collaborative, was followed by a second 'heroic' period<sup>13</sup> started by the '68 itinerary, which condense the abrupt and definitive break of the avant-gardes with the Art Institution.

In any event, that which joins these avant-gardes and artistic institutions is a changing even contradictory tie, dictated by passing joint experiences or more persistent belongings, stormy ruptures and temporary 'captures', asynchronisms, likewise consonances that enabled the development of common initiatives.

The metaphor 'out of synch' may be useful when describing a bond often marked by disagreement between the most radicalised areas of the avant-gardes and the modernising impulses of the institution. Some of the most rupturing, unnerving, unclassifiable protests challenged in vain to enter the institution (seeking a space, resources, a public), whereas the modernising circuit tends to assimilate solely the most moderate areas.

What do I mean? At the end of the fifties, Alberto Greco and Kenneth Kemble complained bitterly because they were unable to find a gallery in Buenos Aires to exhibit Greco's monochrome pictures and Kemble's *Paisajes suburbanos* (*Suburban Landscapes*) series, wich was an obvious formal dialogue with European Informalism, based on assemblies of iron plates, wood and waste found in the street; the very same materials that people used to build precarious dwellings in shanty towns. As Marcelo Pacheco points out, This industrial refuse, and what he called 'object cadavers' – materials that spoke, held the memory of their origins, and retained their 'associative relationships'- became representations of a social context".<sup>14</sup>



*Suburban Landscape* by Kenneth Kemble (1959), fragment.

<sup>13</sup> Here I have inverted the phases proposed by Edoardo Sanguinetti in *Vanguardia, ideología y lenguaje*, Caracas, Monte Ávila, 1969.

<sup>14</sup> Marcelo Pacheco, "From the Modern to the Contemporary: Shifts in Argentine Art, 1956-1965", in: Inés Katzenstein, *Listen Here, Now!*, New York, MOMA, 2004, p. 21.

In 1961, Antoni Tàpies held his first exhibition in Buenos Aires (and South America) in the National Fine Arts Museums, which was read by agents and critics as a model for young local painters to follow. Some years later, the modernising circuit prioritised kinetic art while other avant-garde trends, like the conceptual movement, were relegated until their advanced condition started being recognised in recent years.

As to the post-avant-gardes, whose prefix inevitably remits to discussions in the eighties between modernity and post-modernity, I'll retake the distinction made by Nelly Richard in her analysis of the Chilean "escena de avanzada" during the Pinochet dictatorship: two alternative relationship models between art and social criticism. She differentiates between the *avant-gardists'* projects, where art is understood as the articulator of the forces of change, and the *post-avant-gardists* who sought to design operations capable of altering and subverting system logic into actions located on a micro-scale.

Regarding the debate that I'd like to take over here, Richard proposes that 'the first avant-gardist supposition questioned by post-modernism is its radical faith in an absolute counter-institutionalism'.

In a recent interview, Brian Holmes characterises the post-avant-gardes as those fuzzy contemporary movements socialising knowledge, making resources available, i.e. enabling the participation of a broader spectrum of people in the manufacture of new images and languages, introducing them into a circulation far beyond the restricted artistic circuit. What was an isolated prototype or avant-gardist experiment today may be a collective heritage, a reservoir of socially available resources. The post-avant-gardist situation would mean a shift from the avant-garde (as an elite or advanced group) towards the movement.

In particular, I'm proposing thinking of a series of practices that appeared in Argentina over the last decade linked to the *Escraches* of the HIJOS (organization of Sons and Daughters of Missing People during the last Dictatorship) and the launching of social protagonism, which had its greatest impact in the popular rebellion of December 2001. These practices are exercised by movements not necessarily defined as artistic, yet which very often take their repertoire of resources from the avant-garde and neo-avant-garde legacy. And, which in some cases are questioned by a constellation of important curatorial and institutional initiatives (from Documenta X onwards) to achieve legitimacy and visibility within the artistic field.

The temptation to consider these initiatives as a new integration cycle of disruptive productions in the institution is easier, but it doesn't convince me any more. If we consider thinks about an "inside" and an "outside" of art, associated with political action, a good example may be programs like the one carried out at the Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art that articulated with social movements, where the museum declines to be merely an exhibition receptacle/producer but functions instead as a research and discussion area, as a nexus of past and present experiences, a confluence between groups of artists and activists. Advancing the debate on proposing a balance of the limits and scopes of these radical proposals will prove valuable.

I think the situation of the Argentinean artistic-political collectives is different from the European, insofar as there is an outside to the artistic circle where the groups act, articulated to social movements, responding to their demands or callings, co-operating or collaborating with them. This doesn't mean that these same groups are not within the artistic field, even when, as in the case of GAC (*Grupo de Arte Callejero, Street Art Group*), they prefer to avoid defining their practices as artistic. 'Ours is a specific form of militancy... It was the artistic field which classified us as artists,' says Carolina

Golder, one of their members. Although, paradoxically, this group reached maximum visibility from their participation in the last Venice Biennial and other international and local calls.

The different groups' strategies are multiple, and what's certain is that delimiting a self-excluding inside and outside is not useful. So, does this binary model serve a purpose? I'll take the liberty of sharing with you a recent case where these tensions and dilemmas became manifest, not so much to question as to form the interrogative in more complex terms.

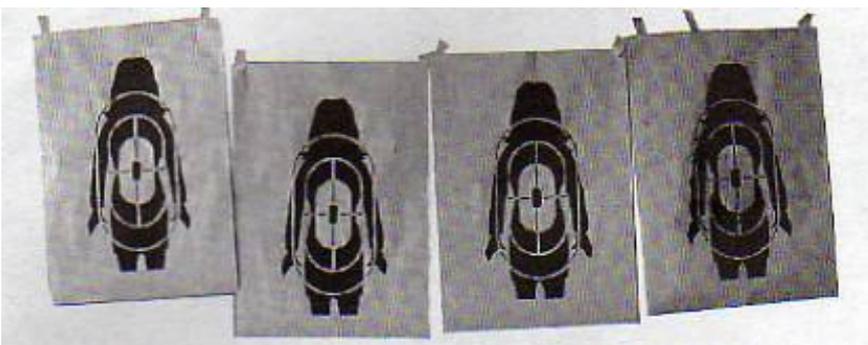
On 26 June 2002, in what became known as the Avellaneda massacre, two young picketers, Maximiliano Kosteki and Darío Santillán, were murdered by police officers during the fierce repression of a massive demonstration,<sup>15</sup> which cut off Pueyrredón Bridge, one of the arteries of Buenos Aires City. Three years after, during the hearing for the guilty parties, several different artistic initiatives took place.

On the one hand, many art collectives actively participated in the calls of the demonstrators to cut off Pueyrredón Bridge for two days and for a 38-day camp opposite the courts with bands, theatre, and *murgas* (groups of carnival dancers and singers).



Aspect of mobilisation on Pueyrredón Bridge, Buenos Aires 26th June 2005.

An article in *Indymedia* characterises this presence as a protest crossbreeding or 'aesthetic contamination'. GAC took *Blancos Móviles* (*Mobile Targets*) to the camp, an unsigned graphic resource comprising silhouettes of a man, woman, boy and girl with targets superimposed, printed on paper that contained an explicit call for intervention.





Some uses of mobile targets, graphic device manufactured by GAC and made available to different social movements

Since 2004 the mobile targets have circulated in different places and contexts (from international exhibitions to callings of different social movements), being charged with different meanings from their appropriation by each addressee. In the camp, the targets were used to criticise those politically responsible for the Avellaneda Massacre. As the promoters themselves said: 'We stuck the heads of the guilty parties on the targets and played at shooting the target with stones.' For the first time, the use subverted the resources, or rather inverted its most directed sense (the identification of subjects with their silhouette on the target frequently stimulated by the incomplete statement: 'We're still the target of....'). Here is a resource, pointing out society's victimisation, which enables the generation of a game against the repressors.

Another game was produced with *La Bola-bala (the Ball-Ball)* built by the Arde! Group, a fabric and wire ball exceeding one metre diameter, covered with bullet shells and

empty rifle cartridges. This game-artefact accompanied many marches and was even used in a football game during at the camp.



The Arde Group 'ball-bullet', being repaired before going into action

On the other hand, a group of famous artists (which included: León Ferrari, Juan Carlos Romero, and Luis Felipe Noé) organised 'Artists for Kosteki and Santillán', a group exhibition in the Palais de Glace, an official institution seat of the traditional National Hall of the Plastic Arts.

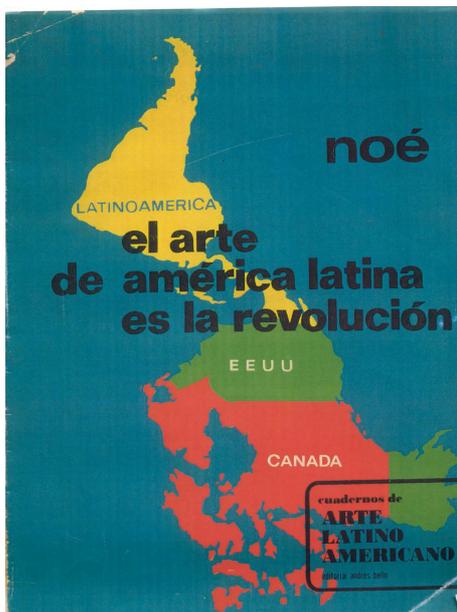


Poster advertising the exhibition in tribute to Kosteki and Santillán, on the Palais de Glace door

It's amazing an official institutional space admits this exhibition in a political context where the picketers are identified with those disturbing the recomposition. However, it has to be mentioned that the place finally occupied by the exhibition was minimal within the building layout.

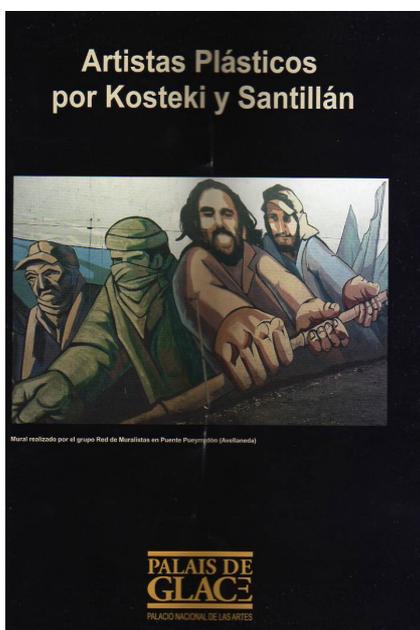
A brief text from the Palais de Glace director placed at the entrance to the exhibition considered the two deaths as the milestone of democracy. If in the political culture of the sixties-seventies, the hero-martyr figure referred to the inevitability or rather the need for death in combat for the life of the revolution, now this price was referred to democracy. The idea that a guerrilla's death fed the life of the revolution, the seventies' idea that revolution is the greatest work of art possible, and the concept of the guerrilla, in particular Che Guevara, is the greatest artist could be associated to the reivindication of Kosteki and Santillán as artists:works (drawings, notes, sketches, some paintings) by the murdered themselves were exhibited in the centre.

The difference being that in the sixties-seventies the guerrilla artistic condition was sustained in the political-action passage.<sup>16</sup> Whereas now the picket martyrs' claim as artists lay in their drawings!



Front page of Luis Felipe Noé's publication (in Santiago de Chile, 1973) during the years he had abandoned painting

The brief catalogue, like the poster, chose as the exhibition emblem a photo the mural by the Mural Painter Network on Pueyrredón Bridge. It is an example of the pre-eminence of certain stereotyped conventions surrounding languages considered to be privileged, such as political art, that exceed left-wing activism.



Catalogue front page of the exhibition 'Plastic Artists by Kosteki and Santillán' in the Palais de Glace

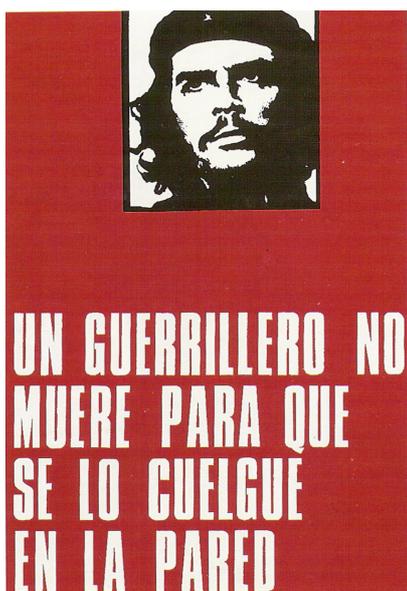
The result of the call was overwhelming, and hundreds of participants of all ages and aesthetics exhibited in a certain way the common sense installed in the current artistic agenda regarding the art mandate of intervening in public, political or social affairs. The set-up insisted in this avalanche: there being very little space in the Palais de Glace

<sup>16</sup> 'Che's life is a work of art greater than any of the rubbish hanging in any museum in the world,' proclaimed out loud the avant-garde from Rosario in 1968, and Luis Felipe Noé, who had given up painting, wrote in 1973 'Latin American art is the revolution'.

periphery corridor, the effect was of accumulation, superimposition of works, in a kind of 'we're thousands', where individual voices are indistinguishable.

Several street art groups that had previously been in the camp also took part, with the sole exception of GAC. Although the members of Arde! wanted to take them, there was no space in these jam-packed corridors for *The Ball-ball*, battered by use and rusted by the outdoor weather. The street artistic activism was reduced to the odd poster and photo, yet nothing stood out in this *mare magnum*, although the *Indymedia* chronicle distinguished between 'works of art' and artistic-political 'tools'. A question that stands out in this case, is what happens when street action recordings are exhibited as works (i.e. video, photos, and explanatory panels). The museum entrance converts into document what minutes earlier had been intensity of action.

Meanwhile GAC, followed by their participation in the last Venice Biennial<sup>17</sup> and important international projects like *Ex Argentina* (2004) and *Creativity Collective* (2005), has been posing a series of difficulties regarding participation in conventional exhibition spaces and has invented a sardonic denouncement campaign of the Palais de Glace exhibition, although it was not specified. The idea was to circulate a poster with the conventionalised image of the murdered picketers and the slogan 'two picketers didn't die to be hung on a wall': a direct reference to Robert Jacoby's anti-poster, that says 'A guerrilla never dies so you can hang him on a wall'.



Roberto Jacoby, 'A guerrilla never dies so you can hang him on a wall' (1969)

Balances subsequent to the exhibition also posed differences: Etcétera considered participation had been a mistake, and Arde! the contrary. The advertised coincidence between the inauguration of the National Hall and opening of the Kosteki and Santillán exhibition also led to different considerations: what for some was clear evidence the exhibition would be fagocited midst a traditional official event, for others was an occasion to achieve the greatest media repercussion possible and as such political

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<sup>17</sup> "The invitation reached Venice and we accepted without much reflection. On finishing assembling the work we said: 'What are we doing here? Before leaving, we discussed whether it was a system fagocitation, but it didn't upset me. I felt like I was in a gynaecology symposium, something totally different, distinct. It was a waste of time. In place like that you lose your entire message. We wouldn't accept that invitation again, it wasn't our place. A work like the one we exhibited becomes decontextualised, losing all its strength, i.e. it made no odds whether it was there or not.' Interview with Carolina Golder, at [www.lavaca.org](http://www.lavaca.org)

efficacy. Finally, museum authorities prevented the two openings from being simultaneous.

However, the picket groups participating in the exhibition had no qualms about being inside the artistic institution. They all interpreted their presence there as a way of repaying the artists for their solidarity gesture: 'They approached the camp and we've come to the museum.' Clearly they also perceive an inside and an outside, yet they also encourage crossing this frontier as never before in their experience.

One might think –as Marcelo Expósito pointed out to me – about the 'question of our incapacity to produce efficient political intervention forms or to present external political processes to the institution in exhibition format'.<sup>18</sup> Jorge Ribalta was more emphatic: 'Outside institutionalisation is inexistent. The question is how we install ourselves inside it... Institutions are not alien to political struggles, likewise forming an area of conflict and not simply one of conflict neutralisation.'<sup>19</sup> I believe there is an inside and an outside, yet acknowledging this does not imply subjecting ourselves to their limits (their 'great division', as Andreas Huyssen<sup>20</sup> calls it).

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<sup>18</sup> Correspondence with the authoress, February 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Ditto

<sup>20</sup> Andreas Huyssen, **Después de la gran división**, Buenos Aires, Adriana Hidalgo, 2003.

***[The following is reconstructed partly from the abbreviated talk given by the speaker and partly from his original notes - ed.]***

*Gabriel Pérez Barreiro*

To pick up on Walter Mignolo's interesting presentation, two aspects jump to mind. Firstly, the question – paraphrasing Raymond Williams's question 'When Was Modernism?' and adjusting to *where* was modernism? – what are the geographies of modern and contemporary art and how can a museum respond to these? Secondly, what terminology do we use to describe and classify culture, and what are the consequences of those decisions?

When Walter quoted Fred Wilson talking about 'Hispanic' culture in relation to his own deconstruction of colonial power relations, what exactly is he referring to and how does culture relate to ethnic or geographic origin? I'd like to underline the word Hispanic and what Hispanic means seen from a U.S.-based artist like Fred Wilson and from a city like Sao Paulo.

Before moving on to these questions, in any discussion of context it is just as important to establish the context from which you are speaking, as well as the context you are speaking about. The issue of Latin American art as defined from a university museum in the state capital of Texas is different from how it might be defined in New York, Paris, Caracas or Sao Paulo. This is an obvious point, but one worth making.

With this in mind, I would like to give a brief overview of the Blanton Museum of art.

It is a University Museum, founded in 1964 as the University Art Museum, then the Huntington Art Gallery. Today it has over 17,000 artworks in all media. Its new building opening in April 2006 will make it the largest university museum in the United States.

Latin American art has been part of the museum since its foundation in 1964, with the first graduate programme in Latin American art history in 1981 and the first full time curatorial position in the country in 1989. The collection is complemented by an extensive Latin American studies programme, centred around the Benson Library, perhaps the most comprehensive Latin American library of any university. Today the collection has almost 2,000 works, one of the largest in the country, and certainly the best known. Some of its strengths include: Mexican Graphics before 1950, School of the South, South American painting of the 1960/70s, and Political Conceptualism of various types.

So, from the perspective of the Blanton, Latin American art is no longer something to be discovered or rediscovered. The Columbus syndrome, the need for every generation to rediscover Latin American art, is one of our central challenges. The stereotyping that takes place with regard to Latin American culture is well-known and needs no elaboration here, but I would like to point out that even those who should know better, such as the New York Times' Holland Cotter, insist on seeing MoMA's famous inclusion of a dozen Latin American works into its permanent collection (although less permanent than we expected) as the arrival of the 'Non-Western'.

This is not so dissimilar from Fred Wilson's position. When he talks of artists of colour he is including many white Latin Americans within that canon.

In general terms, today there are two contrasting positions regarding the insertion of Latin American art in the US institutional context. One that emphasises the difference

and identity of Latin American art in an essentially political position, and another that rejects it in favour of globalisation in an essentially market-led position.

The first position has its roots in the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. During this period, the grass roots desire for visibility and self-representation led to the establishment of cultural organisations dedicated to recording, rescuing and interpreting the Latino experience in the United States, such as El Museo del Barrio or the Galería de la Raza. The 1980s saw the incorporation of minority politics into the mainstream: Fred Wilson's project is part of that story. This is the period when Latin America and Latino start to be used as synonyms for all 'other' art. This is the first expression of what is now a consensus: a single Latin culture defined in terms of US minority population, in which all dark-skinned and Spanish-speaking people are assumed to share a single background, as defined in the United States. A new tension arose between Latin American and Latino artists in this period. On the one hand, Latin American artists were uncomfortable being pigeonholed into minority status along US political parameters when they considered themselves anything but a minority in their own countries. On the other side, US Latinos were frustrated with institutions substituting their much struggled-for political visibility with artists from Latin America who were flown in to stand in for the Latino experience, as if this were all the same. A classic example of this in the field of contemporary art is the predominance of the border or cultural hybridity or bilingualism as a topic in US discussions of Latin American art. The US-Mexico border experience is automatically assumed to be the dominant paradigm for all Latin American peoples, particularly artists. To give an anecdote, I once heard a Canadian curator talk about the participation of the Sao Paulo artist Iran do Espirito Santo in InSite on the Tijuana/San Diego border, justifying his inclusion by saying that 'of course, as a Brazilian, he knows all about borders'. In reality, Sao Paulo is extremely far from any border other than the customs desk at the international airport.

The second position claims the opposite. Rather than insisting on identity, origins, blood, and political visibility, the emphasis is on the global nature of culture. This movement started in the 1990s, largely through the action of artists rather than institutions. When Gabriel Orozco or Felix González Torres refused to be classified as 'Latin American artists', or be shown in national or regional survey exhibitions, they generated a paradigm shift after which any contemporary artist could aspire to be just that, without having to show his or her passport. The commercial art world responded almost immediately, as did the biennial and art fair circuit, to the point that now you can find artists from any corner of the world in Chelsea, Miami, or wherever there is an international biennial. But of course, just as any market tends to globalise without necessarily spreading equality or greater understanding, the increasing visibility of certain Latin American artists on the international circuit does not mean that conditions are the same everywhere. Context is still important but the valid question remains how to articulate difference without essentialising or instrumentalising artistic production.

At the Blanton we have addressed these issues in several ways, and I will concentrate on just two aspects here, both focused on the permanent collection: strategies of display, and collection growth (what and how to collect).

With the opening of the new Blanton museum in April of next year, the issue of how to present our collections became paramount. With significant collections classified as 'Latin American' on one hand and 'American' on the other (there being no European art in the collection), both curators decided that these terms were no longer justifiable as an organising principle. The issue became how to discuss the context of these works, while articulating an alternative vision of the development of modern and contemporary art in this continent. The question behind all of these terms: Latin American, American,

Latino is one of culture, geography and context. We tend to think that these are all the same thing: culture and context are equated with political geography. In fact, I would argue that there are at least four different types of geography: physical, political, economic and cultural, each of which draws a totally different kind of map and creates different categories for the work of art. The first step was to think about cultural rather than political geography. If we consider almost any important Latin American modernist or contemporary artist, we see the mobility is the norm: very few were born, lived and died in the same place. For example: Torres-García, Lygia Clark, Luis Camnitzer, José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, Roberto Matta, Lucio Fontana, Wifredo Lam, Liliana Porter, Tarsila do Amaral; their context is clearly an international one. Add to this the lack of connection between the different countries and cities of Latin America, and the prospect of a coherent Latin American collection disappears.

The first step was to change the classification system within the museum, remove the adjective. The apparently small step was in fact the most radical, as it eliminated the categories of Latin American and American art, and allowed us to speak of a geography of cities and dates rather than one of identities. This very practical step immediately re-defines the terms of discussion and allows for a more accurate understanding of specific contexts and allows us to see one modern and contemporary collection where before there were two.

Now while this installation, which we called America/Americas, is largely a response to an already existing collection, what about the growth and expansion of this collection? What does it mean to try to build a Latin American collection today when we have effectively disabled the term within the museum's display? The first thing to note is how little curatorial discourse has surrounded collection building in Latin American art. In this field, the terms of discourse have largely been those of temporary exhibitions and projects. It seems to me that there are at least three fundamental questions in this regard: *why* acquire? *what* to acquire? and *how* to acquire it?

To this first question, *why?*, I would suggest that there are important issues of patrimony and conservation that speak directly to one of the responsibilities of museums, however unfashionable that may sound. If we are to aspire to a new, more inclusive historical model, museum collections must be a part of that equation.

To the second question *what?* to acquire, we work in two directions: one is to fill historical gaps whenever possible, as defined by existing strengths. The other is to address the complex issues of circulation in contemporary Latin American art, and not let the market do our work for us by assuming that everything good will find its own way to Chelsea or Miami. Over the past three years we have put together, with very limited funds, collections of art from Argentina, Paraguay, Cuba, and Chile, presenting the works through a series of exhibitions and publications and research projects. For many artists, the Blanton is the first international museum to collect their work. Once the work enters the museums, it enters into dialogue with the other collections, be they American or from elsewhere in Latin America. If place is one of the reasons behind the acquisition of a work, it is not a determinant of how it will be displayed.

This immediately raises the last question regarding collections: *how?* to acquire. It is clear that building a meaningful Latin American collection cannot be done by shopping in Chelsea, Miami, or London: the end of a very long food chain. The world is not flat, despite Thomas Friedman's theory, and artwork does not circulate as easily as other forms of information. Our acquisition programme features regular travel and research, and we also take advantage of our own graduate students and try to acquire work related to their often very innovative research topics. But a museum cannot work alone, and one of the problems for this field has been the lack of a sophisticated collector

base. In 2003 we created the Blanton Latin American Circle to encourage non-Latin American collectors of contemporary art to travel to Latin America and learn for themselves about the art of the region without necessarily having a political or identity-based agenda. Most of the work you have seen today was acquired for the museum by this group of patrons. Finally, the most important step in moving away from the shopping model of collection growth has been to work in partnership with the artists themselves, removing the need for intermediaries and fully engaging with art as process, information and research rather than just product or fetish.

To finish this presentation I will take a quote from Hans Michael Herzog, director of the Daros Latin American Collection in Switzerland, one of the wealthiest and most powerful collections in the world. Of the vast Latin American collection Herzog has said: 'My goal, in a way, is to hold up a mirror to Latin Americans, because I think they see only parts of themselves and I want to encourage them to see all of themselves. If they could fully understand the impact they make, they would have a different self-image, a different awareness of themselves. And I think that would give them great potential, great power and dynamism.' The paternalism behind the idea that this great and wealthy collector will evangelise the poor Latin Americans into understanding who they are speaks for itself. The need is clearly not for anyone to teach anyone else who or what they are, but rather to engage in an open and two-way process and create new circuits and possibilities.

## **The Central American horizon: emergence of institutions in a neo-colonial, post-war situation**

*Virginia Pérez-Rattón*

We have been asked by the organizers to configure our individual interventions in this round table, in relation to the main topics of the keynote addresses of this conference. However, rather than commenting directly on the previous lectures, but in fact related very closely to something which has been addressed specifically in relation to museums and like-institutions, that is, issues of power, I have decided to take this opportunity to speak about the unknown reality of the museum system in one of the most peripheral regions, Central America. This might hopefully provide an insight into the ways in which cultural agents, curators, museum directors and artists deal with the problems and issues that arise from a colonial past and a neo-colonial present, not in any way attached to Spain – the colonial metropolis up to 1821, date of the independence -, but in relation to the new imperial power of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the United States of America. Everybody knows the region is considered as their 'backyard' and there is even a saying: "when the north sneezes, we catch cold". In fact, we are living in a present that is tinted by a self-colonising attitude.

In addition to these issues, after sharing these days with colleagues from over the world, I have found out that Costa Rica, or the whole region for that matter, is some kind of transparent non-place and that the dimension and diversity of our continent is not really perceived from the outside. For example, I have been asked whether there will be a post-congress tour to Costa Rica. It would be easier to organize a post-congress tour to Paris! Costa Rica is about twelve hours and several connections away from São Paulo, and it is not an island.

So, I'll begin by showing a map! As you can see, Central America looks to the Caribbean on one side and towards the Pacific on the other, and this of course is Cuba... over here Jamaica, Santo Domingo and Haiti, Puerto Rico – that IS an island - and down here Trinidad & Tobago, the lesser Antilles, etc. Over here on the mainland you can see Guatemala, Honduras, Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. So now that we all know where we are, let us continue.

The ideas I am expressing here are, more than theoretical approaches, the result of my experience in public office and private, independent artistic initiatives within the Central American context, and of the confrontation of that background with the structures of international cultural agencies. In relation to cultural production, this has been marked by the recent radicalisation of the global processes towards a stronger control, growing censorship and an evident conservative wave, local but influenced by the new authoritarianism and that influences all spheres of action.

As I mentioned, this region has been quite peripheral to the international art world and cultural arena, and to the so-called thought-generation centres, but quite close to the doings and un-doings of the North American imperial power. The regional political situation in relation to the USA is an aspect that must be addressed when speaking of art, culture and museums in the area. A few facts might complete the external perspective of how one works, no matter what the odds, in a place where the awareness of being not only in a different place but operating in another time is a basic notion, and where a certain supposed "backwardness" might revert towards a real possibility for reflection. We live at a different rhythm, where priorities are still often on

a basic level and a local scale, but we must be aware of a growing mobility to and from the region, and of the power games that take place.

The Central American isthmus runs from Guatemala to Panama. However, Panama, until 1903, was part of the Kingdom of New Spain, as Colombia was known. This represents a somewhat different colonial past than the other countries, formerly states or provinces, governed from Guatemala, siege of the political, economical and ecclesiastical power up to independence from Spain in 1821, and which covered what is now Central America - Guatemala itself, Honduras, Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. Belice, called British Honduras until recently, is linked more to the Commonwealth, is anglo and feels closer to the insular Caribbean than to mainland Central America. When, in 1903, Panama became independent, it immediately fell under the domination of the United States through the colonial enclave of the Canal, which drove Theodore Roosevelt to declare at the United States Senate, 'I took the isthmus'. So no wonder Central America defines its identity not only from a pre-Columbian heritage, from diverse degrees of an indigenous present, or from its relation to the traditional colonial power, Spain, and from the European, Middle Eastern, African and Chinese blood that flows in its land, but particularly from the kind of relations that are maintained with the United States. From the time of independence, which took place without the liberation movements that did happen in South America, imperialist intentions were always present. First on the part of Mexico, then through William Walker, and his army of filibusters. Walker was invited by the Liberal party of Nicaragua to help fight the Conservatives, but in fact accepted with the idea of establishing slavery states linked to the southern United States. He was finally expelled in what is called the Campaign of 1856, in which Costa Rican troops and civilians marched through Nicaragua against them. This is not to be considered an isolated event, but a key issue in the history of the United States, and it took place in between the expansionist war against Mexico in 1846-48, and the beginning of the American Civil War of 1861, a period dominated by the ideology and spirit of the Manifest Destiny. For Walker and his followers, there was an ethical foundation and a historical need, imposed by Providence, in their actions of domination and conquest, not very far from the present situation of the American administration of 2005. Had Walker been successful in his intentions, maybe the outcome of the Secession War would have been different.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the presence of the United Fruit Company, the various rail companies and the Panama Canal, meant the virtual occupation of the region. The US marines disembarked in the 1930s in Nicaragua to combat Sandino, who had led the rebel movement against the Somoza dictatorial dynasty from its beginnings. In 1954 the Americans once again intervened and ousted Jacobo Arbenz, the democratically elected Guatemalan president, who had sought deep changes in land ownership and education. This coup was one of the main detonators for the guerrilla movements in Guatemala, a bloodshed that gradually spread over the years to the rest of the region and finally exploded in an open armed conflict that lasted until the late eighties and killed hundreds of thousands of Central Americans and produced a massive exile of Nicaraguans, Salvadorians and Guatemalans.

Costa Rica, officially neutral and having abolished the army in 1948, was exempt from the open war. However it was affected by the conflict, mainly by becoming a recipient for refugees fleeing from the violence, as it had secured education, civil liberties and social welfare early on, and was the natural destination. It also suffered in its trade relations to the region. The massive influx of asylum seekers – which represented about 25% of the national population in 1985 – decreased after the peace treaties but coincided with a major economic crisis. Now, the immigrant population accounts for about 10 to 15% of our population. Peace processes were initiated in 1989, just a

couple of years before “Operation Just Cause”, the American invasion that ousted the initially American-appointed Noriega from Panama, bombing a large densely-populated section of Panama City and killing around 5,000 Panamanians.

Each of the four countries at war had to sign its own peace agreement between internal forces in conflict, and the last signature took place in El Salvador in 1996. Ensuing changes transformed the regional situation and implied complex relations between different right and left-wing factions, governments and guerrillas, in which many of the rebel movements became political parties and entered the democratic processes. This created new expectations, not only political and economic, but also in relation to cultural production and networking.

The cultural production strategies that followed during the nineties, particularly in the visual arts, were implemented in a very basic and domestic way. It meant putting ourselves together in the first place, exorcising the memory of the unspeakable and unforgivable to avoid going back, and rebuilding the internal broken links. Collaborative regional action from within, mainly from the independent sector, supported by international NGO’s, started to configure itself in various ways. Efforts were directed towards several aspects: solving the invisibility problem to begin with; counteracting the stereotypes associated with the image promoted by the official instances of tourism and foreign investment, re-building our image, understanding our own complex and changing identities, and most of all, towards the creation of Place where this notion had only been linked to the conflict.

The region was also battered by severe natural disasters – earthquakes, storms and floods, particularly Mitch, that devastated Honduras in late 1998 - but nonetheless trying to pick up the remains of itself. Within this grim situation, it is obvious that building cultural infrastructure was not a priority, and this is a long term process still in the making. The stability and relative prosperity of Costa Rica, in relation to the rest of the area, and governments in the early 70’s that created a Culture Ministry, are behind the fact that this country developed an important network of official institutions – museums and public exhibition spaces -, the State being the major collector<sup>21</sup>. While these institutions are prone to excessive bureaucracy, suffer from chronic understaffing and are poorly funded, they continue to program activities and present exhibitions and collections regularly, and even do a few acquisitions and publications. It is an altogether different story in the rest of the region, where precariousness is the norm.

In relation to some of the lectures in this conference, in which the power of institutions has been questioned, I would like to comment briefly on this. If we consider how the Contemporary Art and Design Museum in Costa Rica, created in 1994, has become a regional reference, what this institution means for the artists from Guatemala to Panama, and even beyond, and the space for freedom and experimentation it represents, it is clear we need museums urgently, and we need them with power, with the power and independence of criteria to change things. Weak institutions will not provide the adequate conditions for the present artistic practice, its situation and context, for the collecting of significant work, and particularly for the way we represent ourselves. So the question really is what to do with the power that an institution can acquire: mobilising the region, towards the creation of Place, erasing the feeling of placelessness, those are the crucial questions.

To round up this intervention I would like to comment through images on a few of the museums in Central America: Guatemala has an Anthropology Museum which has a

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<sup>21</sup> A law permitting the acquisition of art works representing 1% of the total cost of buildings or restoration has allowed for the Insurance Institute, the Social Security and other official instances to build their own collections.

sort of twin building across from it, which houses the Carlos Mérida Modern Art Museum. Both were built by dictator Jorge Ubico in the 1930s, as ballrooms and meeting rooms, with a neo baroque architecture inside and out, extremely intrusive elements in the exhibition of modern or contemporary art. Their small collection of Guatemalan art is interesting, however badly documented and presented. Although some curators have tried to organize meaningful exhibitions, the space is very complicated and the funds allocated are practically non-existent. Lucrecia Cofiño, present here in Sao Paulo for this meeting, organized a historical print exhibition this year which was a significant contribution to the knowledge of an important tradition in the local art history. The only purpose-built museum in Guatemala is of course the Ixchel Museum for Indian textiles. Why? As in all the area, funding exists or can be found with the support of governments for any archeological or anthropological institution, anything that deals with the pre-hispanic past, the indigenous population and culture, even if the Indians of the present are second class citizens. There are strong tourism-oriented interests here and on the other hand, presenting artefacts and textiles does not destabilize anyone or anything, like might be the case with modern or contemporary art.

MARTE (Museo de Arte de El Salvador) opened in San Salvador in 2003, built on land given by the government but financed by industrials and other private corporations. Together with the Ixchel, and the Central Bank Museums in Costa Rica (numismatic and pre-hispanic gold collections) they are the only museums in the whole region that have been built as such, in the case of El Salvador, with a design by the studio of Barragán, in Mexico City. In a country where the class differences are extreme, the high bourgeoisie understands the importance of prestige linked to cultural initiatives, although it is very conservative and conventional in its lifestyle and taste. The museum has good conditions, state-of-the-art lighting, a permanent collection and temporary galleries. Its permanent collection is a long term loan from the Julia Díaz Foundation, and it also has and temporary spaces. Up to last year, it was a “receptive” institution but it has already started to generate a few exhibitions and has also opened its doors a bit more to the younger generations.

Honduras is the poorest and most abandoned cultural context in Central America, even though it has a very active marginal and almost underground scene. The National Gallery is a colonial building that houses a collection of twentieth-century Honduran artists, works on loan from the artists or their families. The Spanish Cooperation Agency helped design the layout of this collection, the only one you can see in Honduras, and funded the museological elements to show it. There are other museums in the country dedicated to history, anthropology and pre-hispanic art, but in the poorest of situations.

The Ortiz Gurdíán Collection in Nicaragua covers from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It keeps part of it in warehouses in Miami - North American modern art mainly -, and possesses two beautiful houses in León, restored and converted into museums. However, they lack air conditioning or any climate control in a city where average temperatures are usually around 28°C or higher, and humidity ranges from 75 to 90%. The collection has no curator and no museographer which results in a complete clutter and confusion of artworks, there is the intention of creating a contemporary art museum in the old match factory in Managua, but the Foundation keeps envisaging working with no director, curator or museographer except the owner himself. During the Sandinista period, in the eighties, the Julio Cortázar Contemporary Museum was created in Managua, the capital of Nicaragua, and a collection was built mainly through donations of works – mostly on paper – by well known international artists. When the Sandinistas lost the elections in 1990, Daniel Ortega’s wife, Rosario Murillo, who had supposedly founded the museum, “kidnapped” the collection. It is only until 2006 that

this museum will finally re-open in the same building it had in 1990. The conditions of the collection are unknown.

A series of restorations of old buildings have allowed for the creation of art institutions in Costa Rica. The state-owned liquor factory built in 1856, and that functioned until 1974 in the same premises, has become the National Culture Centre, with the Minister's office, plus the Contemporary Art and Design Museum (MADC), the National Dance and Theatre companies, a concert hall, and other offices. The enormous main gallery of the museum is the former barrel room. This Museum, with an important international contemporary collection – particularly Latin American - and continuous activities of all sorts, is the main institution in the region. It really works more like a "centre d'art". In 1976, the first art museum in Costa Rica had been founded at the old airport, and has a collection dating from 1880 to the present. A difficult building, it also has a sculpture garden designed in the worst of ways. However, its collection has several masterpieces that are worth the visit. It is also the official "curator" and its board has the function of authorising the acquisitions of other public institutions. The former prison of San José has also been converted into a cultural centre, with the Children's Museum on one side and a concert hall on the other, plus the National Gallery, used as an exhibition space for just about anything. To keep this presentation short, I will not address the historical museums and those dealing with pre-columbian artefacts, except to mention that the Central Bank Museums also have temporary exhibition halls, with a specialized curator, and where modern and contemporary art alternates with historical exhibitions.

In Panama, the only art museum is a private Contemporary Art Museum, which has functioned almost like a gallery, that is, selling exhibited works up to very recently. A terminal institution, completely under funded, it generates practically no shows and the collection is rarely on view. It is used mostly for biennale exhibitions and contests or as recipient of canned exhibitions from embassies and international cultural centres.

This means that in fact, that the most active modern or contemporary art museum in the area is the MADC in Costa Rica, because it not only continuously generates critical thought and practice, but it has kept international links beyond the region, and operates within the perspective of time and place that I mentioned at the beginning. It was created in 1994 and quickly acquired a high profile by opening itself up to the region completely. It was never about being a national art museum, but one with a regional vocation, consciously including Central American artists in the exhibitions together with internationally known artists, which was a new kind of practice that sought to replace the formal separation of international and national. It turned into a regional referent and centre towards which people would converge, but also a centre of dissemination and diffusion of information and documentation. During the years I had the honour of directing it, a website with/for Central American artists was implemented and a strong regional network has developed, after that, video work witnessed an incredible "essor" since 2002, when the MADC started the regional videoart contests, and the Emergent Artists yearly exhibitions.

Both from this museum then and now from TEOR/ética, the struggle then has been to create the sense of *Place*. I could say this has succeeded in a certain sense, at least that there is a new legitimating circuit within Central America, and that artists are keen on showing within the area, validating their own space, and don't always look North. There is a feeling that we are our own centre, and a growing sense of a horizontal structure in which to operate, looking towards neighbours and similar contexts around the world, considering that the South can be located in many different latitudes. \*\*

**Comment following the Panel Discussion III: Ana Longoni, Ariel Jiménez, Gabriel Pérez Barreiro, Virginia Pérez-Rattón. Moderator: Moacir dos Anjos.**

Virginia Pérez-Rattón: A brief comment, because time is short: although we have a very complex situation in Central America, things do get done, and that is what I wanted to convey. Even though our museums are under-financed, have bad premises, and a lot of other problems, things happen in a positive way. What is very interesting is that the museum system is complemented by much more dynamic initiatives that come from the private and the independent sector. So we have the two lines of work: one is the museum system, which in Panama and Salvador are private, and all the rest State owned; and then you have a lot of private initiatives, in every single country. And it is really through these private initiatives that the links have been strengthened. For example, there are national biennials in each country every other year, organised by the regional corporate sector, and in the years in between, a rotating Central American biennial takes place in a different country each time, including the national selections of each one. This year it is housed at the Contemporary Museum in Panama, and for the first time it is a curated show, put up in a very professional way. So there have been changes. In fact, what we try to do is stop complaining and get on with it, because otherwise nothing would get done.