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Where is the error? Ten years of Etcétera

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Translated by Kate Wilson

The Etcétera Collective from Buenos Aires celebrates its 10th anniversary with a retrospective exhibition at Centro Cultural Recoleta (<http://brianholmes.wordpress.com/2007/07/06/etceteras-10th-birthday>). Well known for their long-term participation in the new movements for human rights and justice (against the last Argentinean military dictatorship) which emerged in the 90s after Madres de Plaza de Mayo, and also well recognizable for their po(e/li)tical surrealist, carnivalesque public actions, Etcétera has recently turned into the Errorist International. They asked me for a short text to be included in their newspaper/catalogue for the exhibition (<http://brianholmes.files.wordpress.com/2007/07/catalogoetcetera.pdf>), which I wrote in Spanish (<http://www.ramona.org.ar/node/16039>), but didn't arrive in time. This is the English version of it.

Nowadays, subjects all over the world seem to feel themselves at an impasse. At first glance, the reasons are various, but there is an underlying thread, a red string running underground, that seems to connect our disquiet: a feeling that we are at the end of a biographic cycle. In many places, in many ways, for five, eight, ten years, while the opportunity for radical change was perhaps not, realistically, within our grasp, it did at least seem that we had the opportunity to question and considerably diminish the legitimacy of those dominant world forms under which we don't ever again want to live.

In the transition from the old to the new century, an articulate cry began to resonate in many places with diverse modes, words and faces. One of its faces (or perhaps we should say *masks*) was the heretic, carnivalesque laugh. In 1998 a gentle earthquake began that gave way to the unforgettable carnival of 1999 that, calling itself "against capital" in London, or "of the oppressed" in Nigeria, turned the world, for a moment, alarmingly upside down. I am also told that between 1997 and 1998 a generation of Argentines emerged from disgust at Menemism to transform the duel into a belligerent joy of living. Later, with the popularisation of the *escrache* and the echo it found outside Argentina, we began to hear names that little by little became references, names that today I am lucky enough to be able to count among my friends, brothers and sisters. With some surprise, I discovered that the masks of Etcétera were essentially the same as those that, after that global carnival, we took from Seattle to Québec, Prague or Barcelona. Masks that were threatening for the politician, the economist, or the perpetrator of genocide; uncomfortable also for some of our own, because the carnival and the joy of rebellion were also a way of saying "*¡basta!*" to some of our own historical forms.

"Put your body into political action", we said in various languages, sometimes without knowing that the same was happening elsewhere. 2001, 2002: everything accelerates and things happen very fast. The body, put into action in the streets, ended up beaten, with the same language everywhere (although at very different costs: the comparison, for example, between Genoa - that particularly European trauma - and the repression in Argentina following the 19th and 20th December, is a painful reminder that life has a different value in different parts of the world), and the debris of S-11 ended up falling on all of our heads. Etcétera decided to become the Internacional Errorista, or the Errorist International, to show how "(t)error" has become an instrument applied everywhere, sustained in different ways, to turn around that crisis in governability that emerged in the transition between the centuries: to lay the foundations for the "normalisation" of a (t)errorifically ambivalent multitude. Maybe they will topple governments or flatten suburbs, maybe they will raise the right: with people, these days, you never know. An impasse, as I said. Rather than "what's to be done?", the question of our epoch should perhaps be more modest: "where is the error?"

More information about Etcétera:

<http://transform.eipcp.net/calendar/1183753360>

<http://transform.eipcp.net/correspondence/1170076372>

<http://pr.indymedia.org/news/2005/11/111108.php>

<http://argentina.indymedia.org/news/2006/12/475515.php>

<http://www.ifyouseesomethingsaysomething.net/errorista%20mori.htm>

<http://www.ifyouseesomethingsaysomething.net/erroristas.htm>

<http://www.ifyouseesomethingsaysomething.net/interviews.htm#federico>

<http://www.exargentina.org/>